A Pack of Free Horse Posters! ★ Mmm . . . Chocolate Cake

March/April 2016

American Girl™

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10 tricks for your pics

- Get the **haircut** you want
- **Quiz:** Which room style are you?

So sweet!
One girl, one horse, two of a kind

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new!
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Lea
Clark™
girl of the year™
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BY LISA YEE
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Lea Leads the Way
BY LISA YEE

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On an exciting trip to Brazil, Lea sees beautiful beaches, hikes through a tropical rainforest, and takes photos of the wonderful animals that make these habitats their home. She also makes a new friend, learns to face her fears, and rescues a baby sloth.

She dives in to new adventures

and explores what's in her heart.

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Volume 24, Number 2

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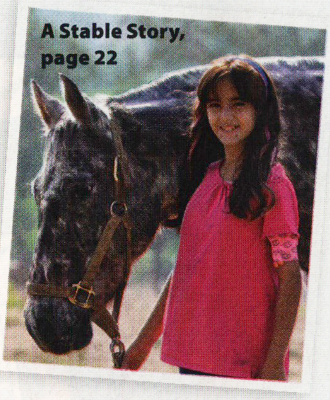

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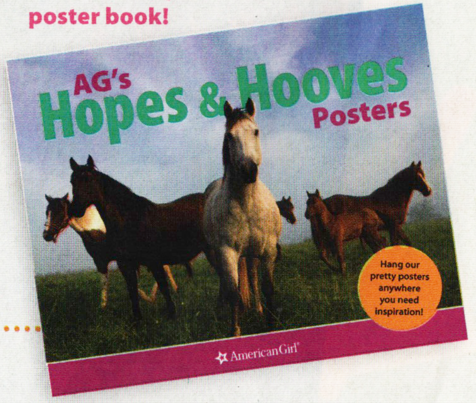
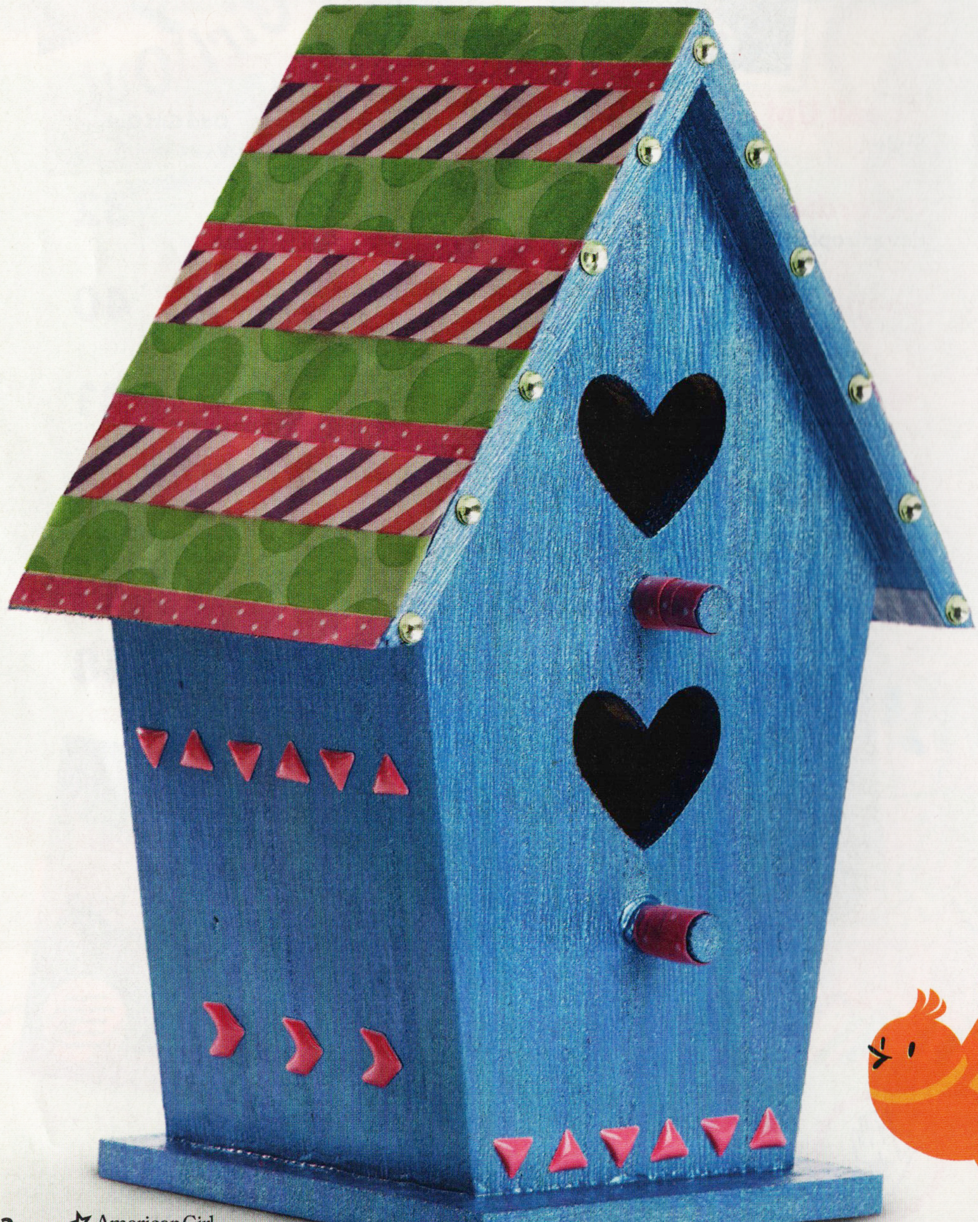

AG's Hopes & Hooves Posters
Hang our pretty posters anywhere you need inspiration!
American Girl

Safety first!
Some of our projects and activities require an adult's help.
When you see this symbol, be sure to ask an adult to work with you.

Cover photo: Steven Talley

Girls EXPRESS™

Chirp, Chirp!



Make a decorative birdhouse for your bedroom.

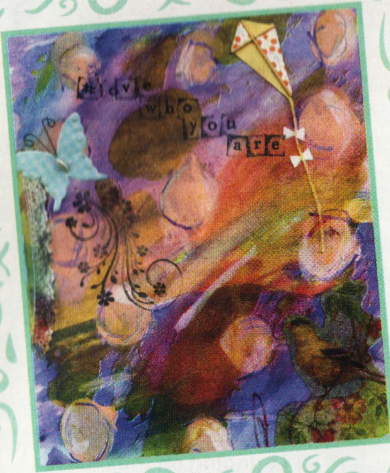
Paint a wooden birdhouse (found at craft stores) a bold color using nontoxic acrylic paint. Let dry. Attach decorative tape to the roof of your birdhouse. Add adhesive gems to the front and sides of the house.

TIP **If you're having a hard time making the decorative tape stick, brush a thin coat of decoupage glue across the taped roof and let dry overnight.**

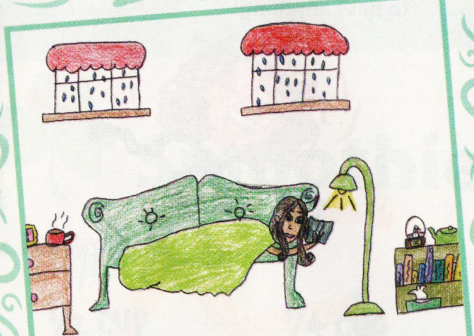
Styling: Melissa Seymour Illustrations: Tracey Wood

AG Art Gallery

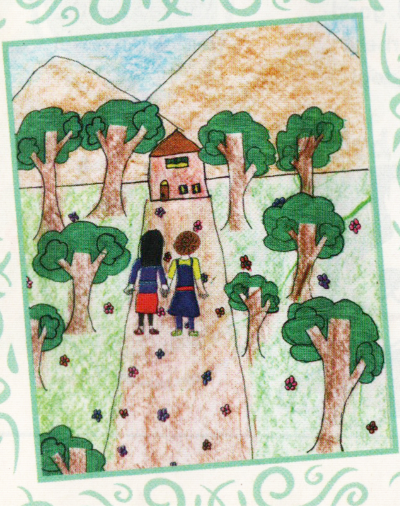
These girls created sweet spring scenes.



Kienyen C.
Age 12, California



Allison H.
Age 13, Maine



Sophie K.
Age 11, Maine

AG Poll

Answer these questions, and then turn the page to see how your answers compare to those of other AG readers.

How do you like to eat apples?

- With peanut butter
- Plain
- With caramel
- With yogurt

What's the best part about sleepovers?

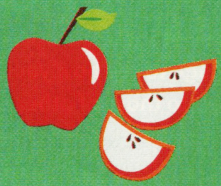
- Painting nails
- Playing games
- Watching movies
- Making crafts

Where have you always wanted to visit?

- Italy
- France
- Hawaii
- England

AG Poll

What girls told us online

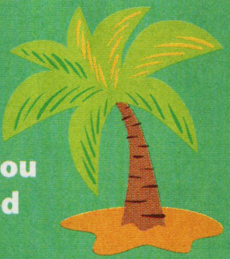


How do you like to eat apples?

With caramel	46%
Plain	32%
With peanut butter	18%
With yogurt	4%

What's the best part about sleepovers?

Watching movies	42%
Playing games	27%
Painting nails	18%
Making crafts	13%



Where have you always wanted to visit?

Hawaii	40%
France	35%
England	15%
Italy	10%

To answer our weekly poll question, go to americangirl.com/playmagazine

Mini Quiz

Paw-fect Pals

March 23 is National Puppy Day! Find out which pup matches your personality.

1. When your friend knows a secret, you
   - a. jump up and down and beg her to tell you what it is.
   - b. ask to hear it but drop it if she doesn't want to tell you.
   - c. stay out of it. She will tell you if she wants to.

2. At your favorite band's concert, you
   - a. dance like a maniac and can't sit still.
   - b. sing along and chat with a friend.
   - c. quietly enjoy it—you don't want to miss anything!

3. Which spring vacation would be the most fun?
   - a. Hiking all day and camping at night.
   - b. Visiting friends or family you haven't seen in ages.
   - c. Lounging on the beach.

4. Your favorite part of the school day is
   - a. gym. You love to play games and run outside.
   - b. lunch. You love catching up with your friends.
   - c. language arts. You love to curl up and read.

5. Your friends would say you're
   - a. excited about everything!
   - b. trustworthy and kind.
   - c. very laid-back.

Answers

Mostly a's

You're a spunky, high-energy Siberian husky!

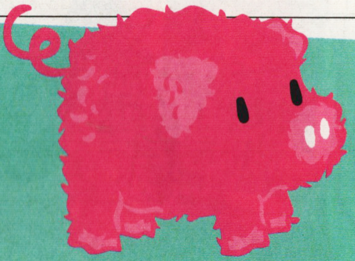
Mostly b's

You're a loyal, good-natured Bernese mountain dog!

Mostly c's

You're a gentle, cuddly Maltese!

Shining Star



Skylar T. loves stuffed animals. "They are always there to comfort you," she says. When she found stuffed animals in a pile of things that her mom wanted to clear out of the basement, the 12-year-old decided to find the animals a good home. She discovered an organization that gives stuffed animals to cheer up kids in emergency situations.

Around the same time, Skylar's school asked students to do community service projects. Skylar wondered if other kids had stuffed animals to donate, too. She talked to her teachers, made fliers, and set up a collection box at school. She collected more than 300 stuffed animals, including a lot of bears, dogs, and pandas, and a few frogs and boa constrictors.

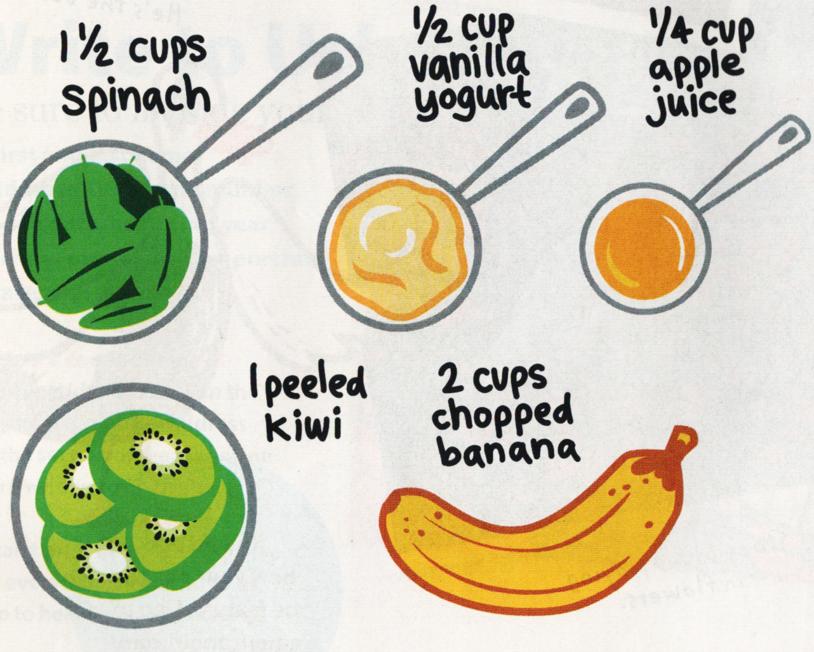
Making the donation felt great, she says. The hardest part was deciding what to donate from the collection of animals in her bedroom. She kept a few favorites but donated a pink pig. "He was a very special animal," Skylar says, "but I thought another kid might need him more than me. I knew it was time to say good-bye."

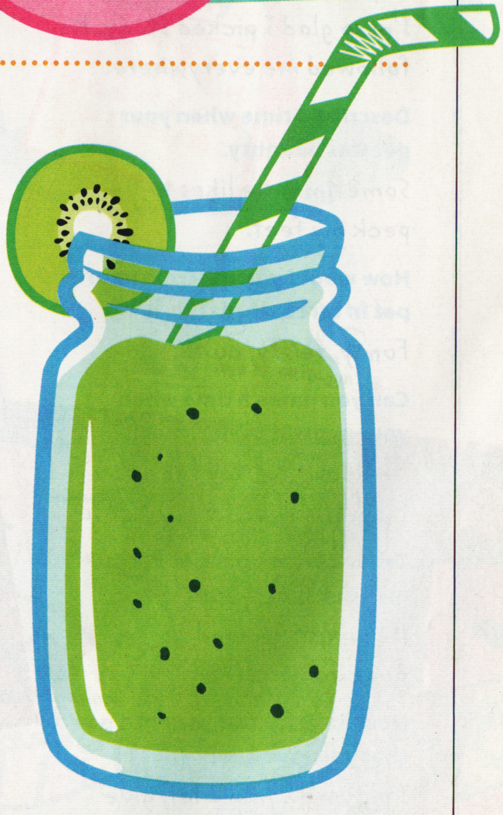
ffed
nimal
ve

You can shine, too. Contact your local police station or fire department to see what items they need. Start a collection and then donate the materials you gather!

Shamrock Smoothie

Make a smoothie for yourself and a friend. Happy St. Patrick's Day!





Place all ingredients into a blender. Ask an adult to blend.

Meet a Reader's Pet

Brianna J. tells us about her quirky pet duck.

Brianna J.

Age 12, Iowa

What's your pet's name?

Stacy. I named him Stacy because when he was a duckling, I thought he was a girl. I still like the name.

Describe the day that you got your pet.

It was very exciting. My brother and I each got to pick out a duckling. I'm so glad I picked Stacy. He followed me everywhere.

Describe a time when your pet was naughty.

Sometimes he likes to peck my feet.

How would you describe your pet in three words?

Funny, feisty, cute.

Can you name a time when your pet was really smart?

He knows to stay far away from the road by our house.

Tell us about your pet's favorite spot in your home.

He loves the pond in our backyard!

How do you show your pet that you love him?

I play with him a lot, give him treats, and make sure he's safe.

These are Stacy's feet.

This is Stacy and me. He's the best.

Stacy loves playing in flowers.

To find out how your pet can be featured, go to americangirl.com/playmagazine

True Story

Karena is only three years old!

Dear American Girl,

Have you ever heard of a leap-year baby? That's a person born on Leap Day, or February 29. Most years, February only has 28 days. But during a leap year, that month gets an extra day. The calendar has 366 days instead of 365. It happens only once every four years!

I'm 12 years old, but because I'm a leap-year baby, technically I'm only three. You read that right— I have had only three real birthdays in my life! You might be thinking I'm making this up. Sometimes when I tell people I'm only three, they're like "yeah, whatever." But when I tell them I was born on a Leap Day, they usually get it.

On the off years, I celebrate my birthday on February 28. But 2016 is a leap year. That means that this year, on February 29, it was time for a big celebration. It's cool having my birthday on Leap Day. It's special. It's different from anybody else.

Sincerely,

Karena B.

Age 12, Minnesota

FEBRUARY
1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28 29

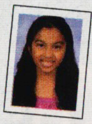
Write to Us!

Be sure to include your

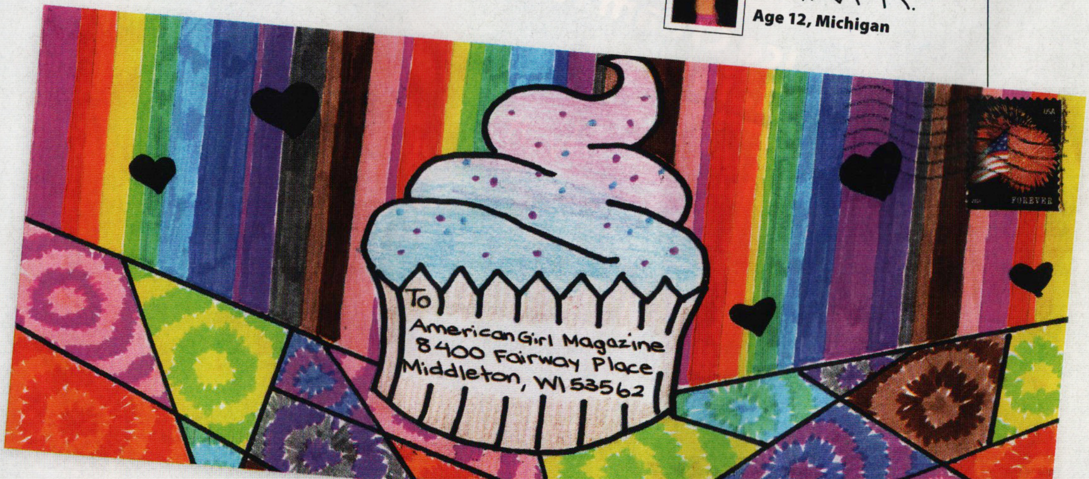
- **First and last name**
- **Address and phone number**
- **Birth date, including year**
- **School photo or other portrait**
- **Parent's signature**

Send us a cool envelope!
Print our address neatly on the front and your return address and the section of the magazine you're writing to on the back.

We can't print every letter, but we read everything you send to us. Hope to hear from you soon!



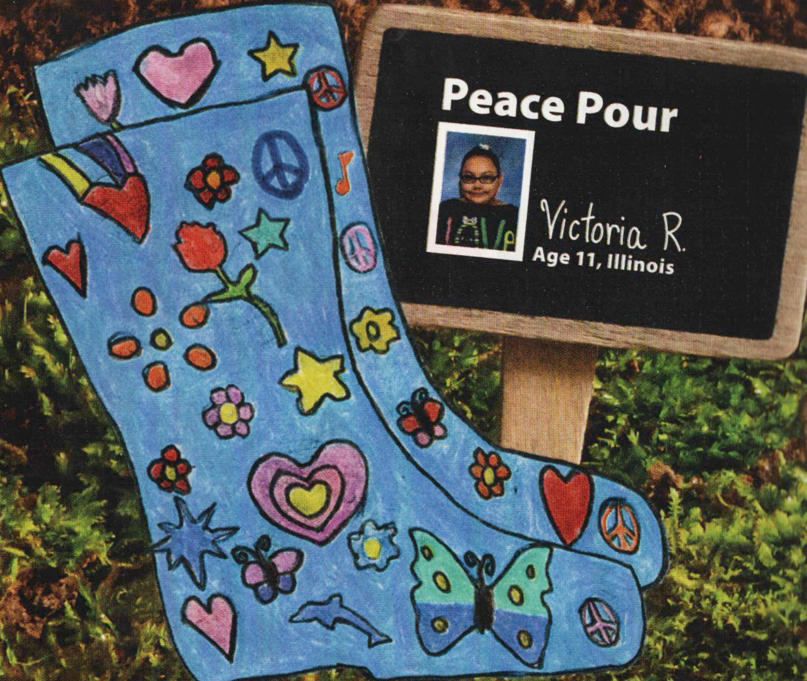
Envelope art by
Purvi R.
Age 12, Michigan



Contest

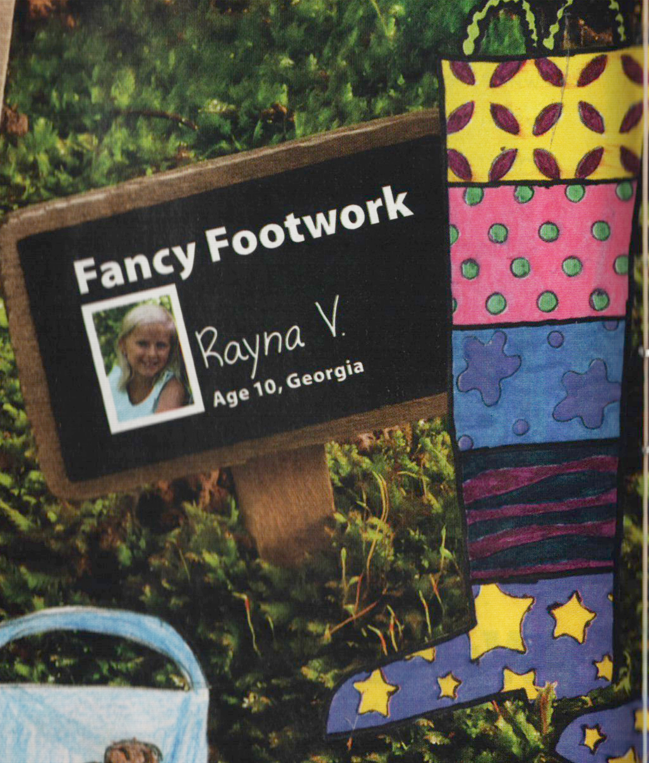
Splish, Splash

These wonderful wellies were created by girls like you.



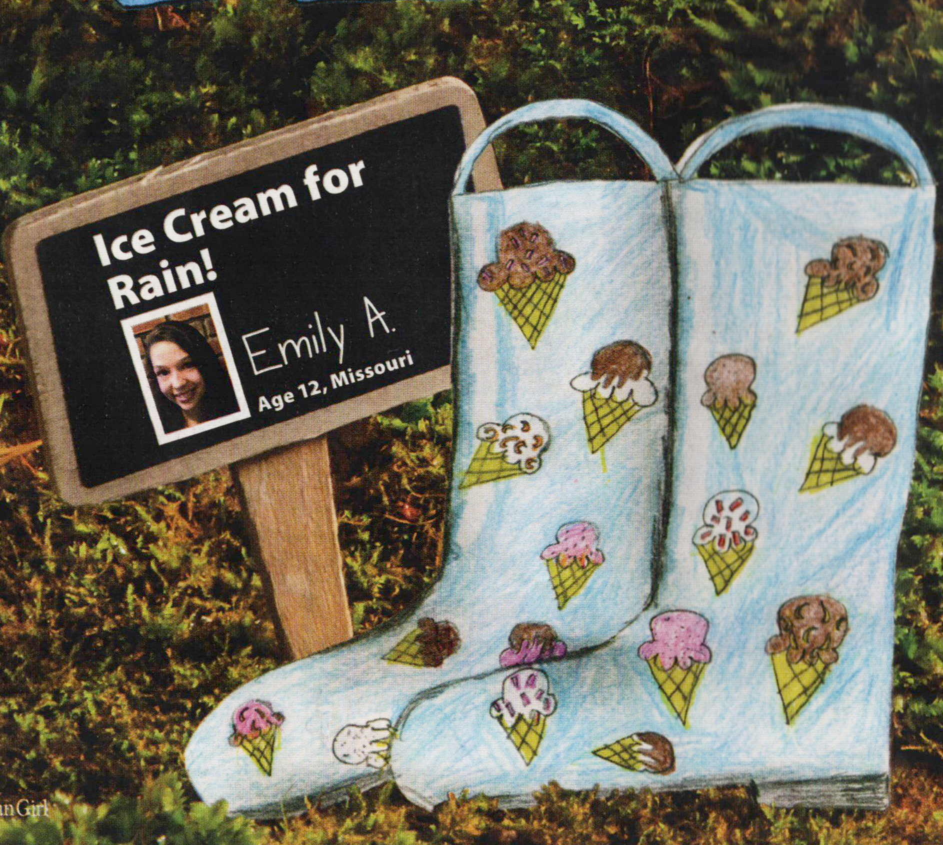
Peace Pour

Victoria R.
Age 11, Illinois



Fancy Footwork

Rayna V.
Age 10, Georgia



Ice Cream for Rain!

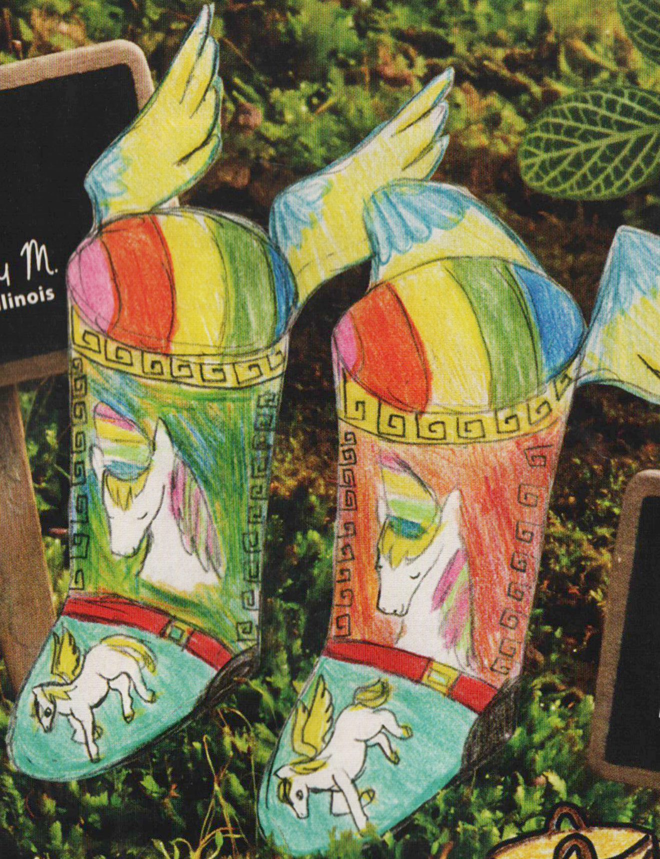
Emily A.
Age 12, Missouri

Styling: Melissa Seymour

Take Off!

Whitney M.

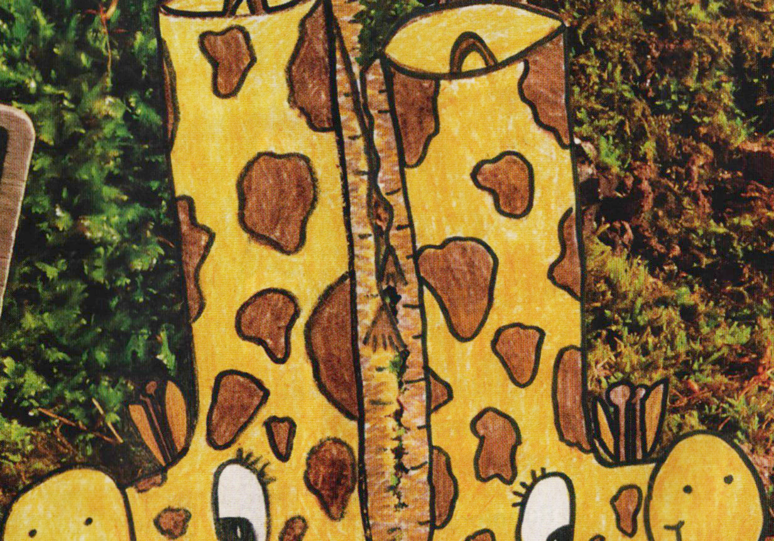
Age 12, Illinois

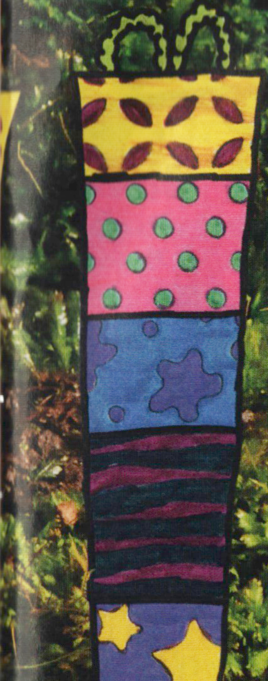


Giraffe Splash

Charlotte S.

Age 12, Illinois

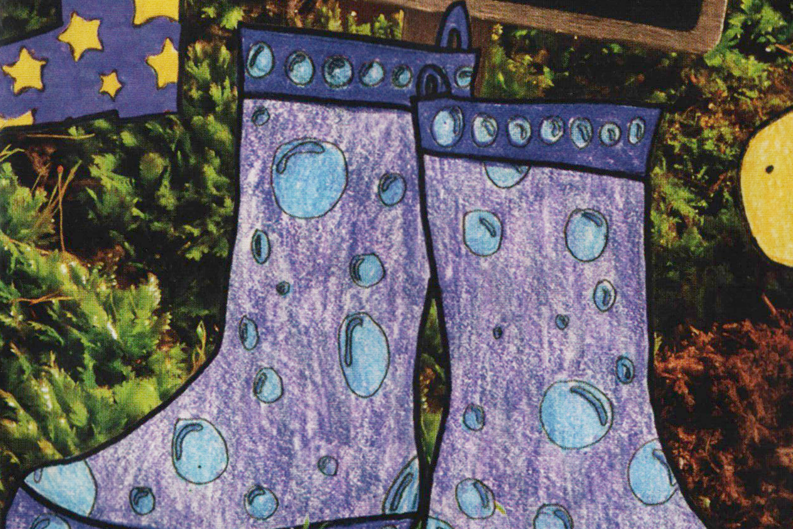




Bubbly Boots

Riley L.

Age 12, Oregon



New Contest: Emojis

Design a new emoji! Is it a dancing animal, a weird object, or a funny face? Is it cool and colorful or sweet and simple? We can't wait to see what you come up with! To send us your original emoji design, follow the instructions on page 7.

Postmark deadline: April 10, 2016. Winners will appear in the September/October 2016 issue.
Sorry—we can't return entries. ★

Style

How would you describe your style?

- Cute 40%
- Comfy 28%
- Sporty 15%
- Trendy 14%
- Fancy 3%

How much do you care about clothes and style?

- A little 53%
- A lot 46%
- Not at all 1%

You came up with great fashion line names!

- Sparkle Giraffe
- Running Late
- Home Sweet Clothes
- Cozy Raindrop
- Rhythm and Shoes
- Sweet Pea Summer

SPARKLE
GIRAFFE

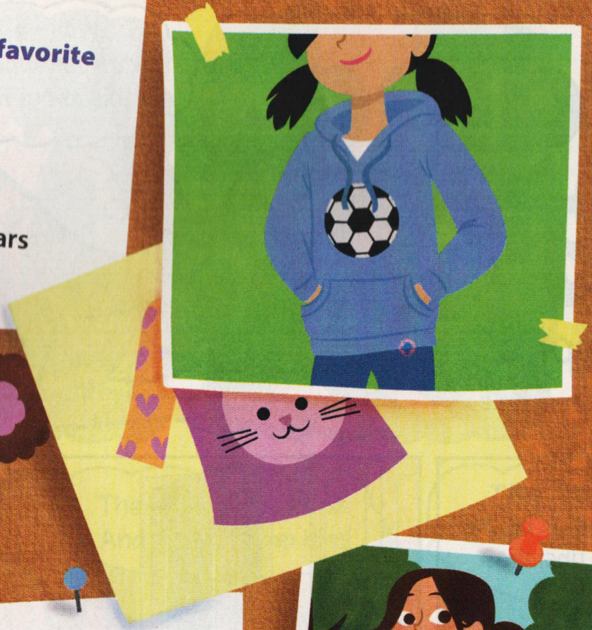
COZY
raindrop

Which bag do you like best?

- Backpack 32%
- Purse 27%
- Tote bag 23%
- Messenger bag 18%

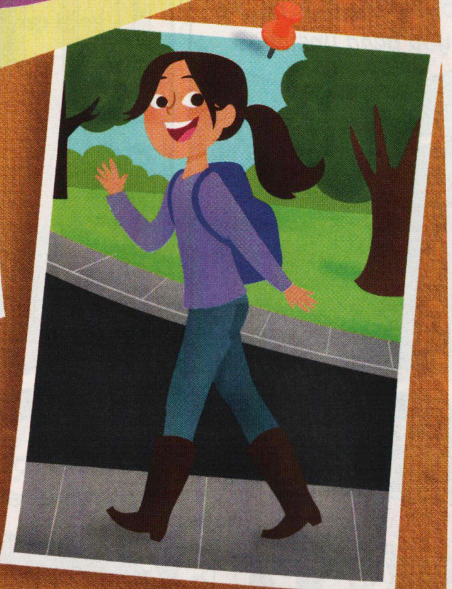
Here are some of your favorite pieces of clothing:

- Flamenco dresses
- Cat shirt
- Headband with bear ears
- Cozy soccer sweatshirt

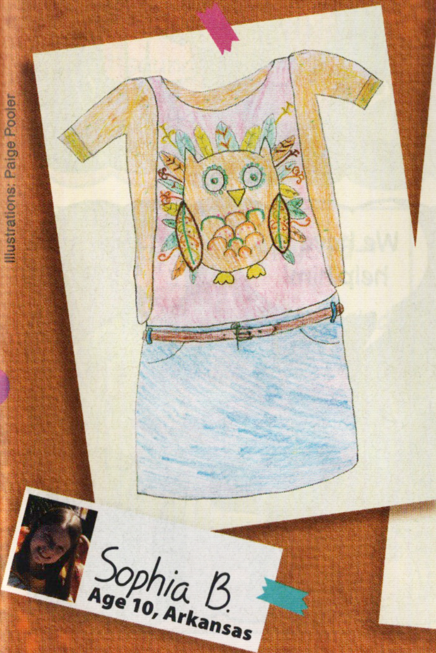


Do you wear a uniform to school?

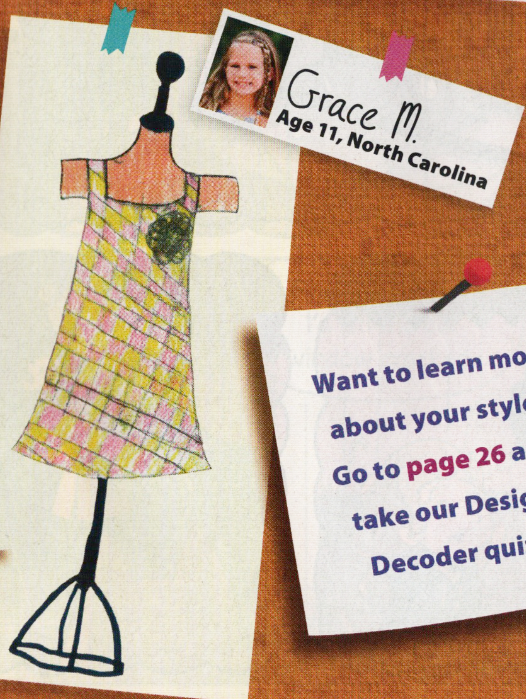
- No 84%
- Yes 16%



Here are dream outfits created by girls like you:



Sophia B.
Age 10, Arkansas



Grace M.
Age 11, North Carolina

Want to learn more about your style? Go to page 26 and take our Design Decoder quiz.

Illustrations: Paige Pooler

Coming Up:
Parties

1. Do you usually have a birthday party?
   YES or NO
2. Do you have a birthday party with your friends or family?
   - **a.** Friends
   - **b.** Family
   - **c.** I have a separate party with each
   - **d.** I have a party with both
   - **e.** I usually don't have birthday parties
3. What's your favorite kind of party to attend?
   - **a.** Holiday party
   - **b.** Birthday party
   - **c.** Costume party
   - **d.** Surprise party
   - **e.** New Year's Eve party
4. Have you ever been to a boy-girl party?
   YES or NO
5. What's the best party food?
   - **a.** Popcorn
   - **b.** Chips
   - **c.** Ice cream and cake
   - **d.** Pizza
   - **e.** Other (please list)
6. What's your dream party? Describe it.

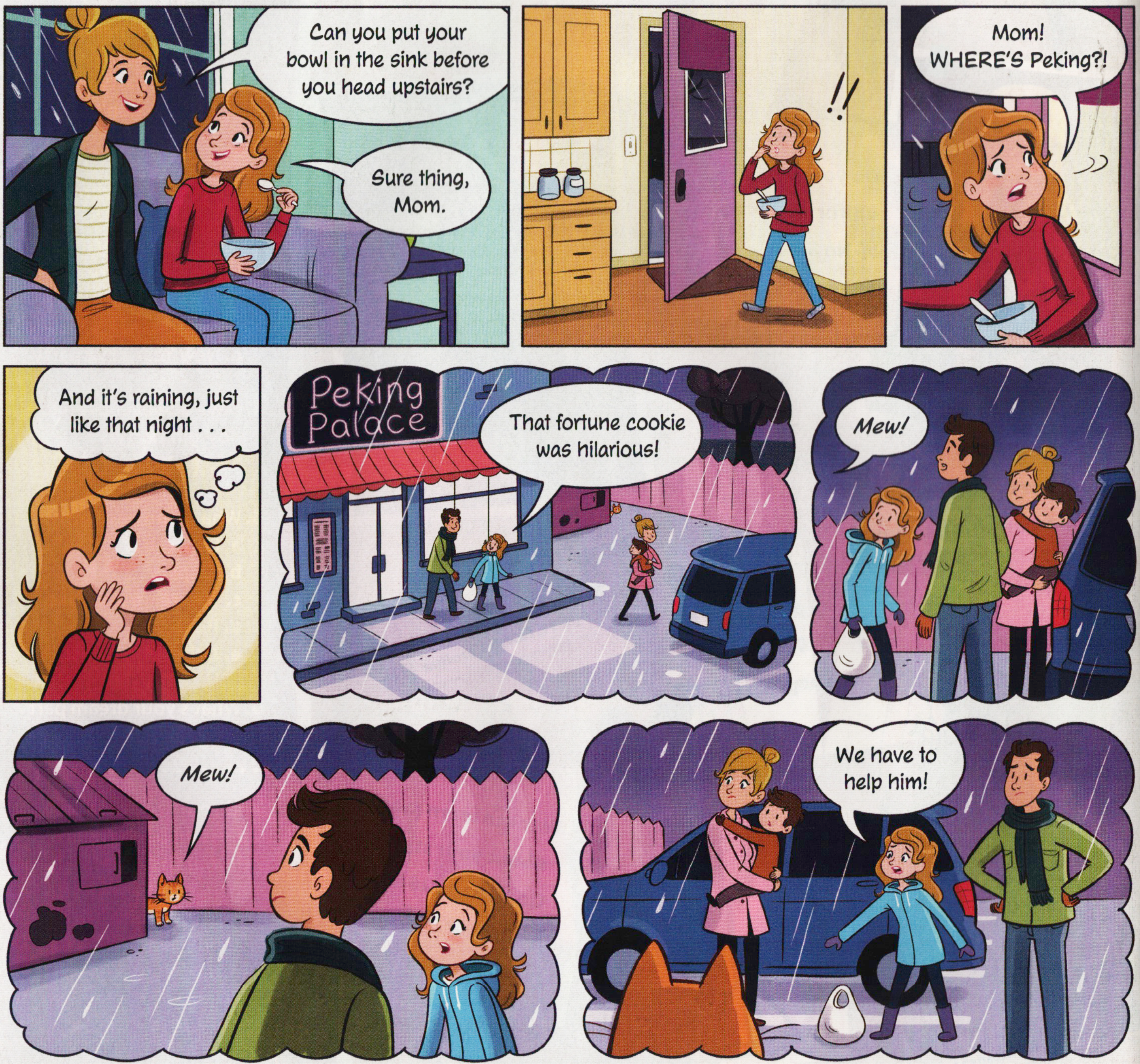
Send your answers to the address on page 7, along with your first and last name, address, school or portrait-style photo, and birth date. Postmark deadline: April 10, 2016. Some answers will appear in the September/October 2016 issue. ★

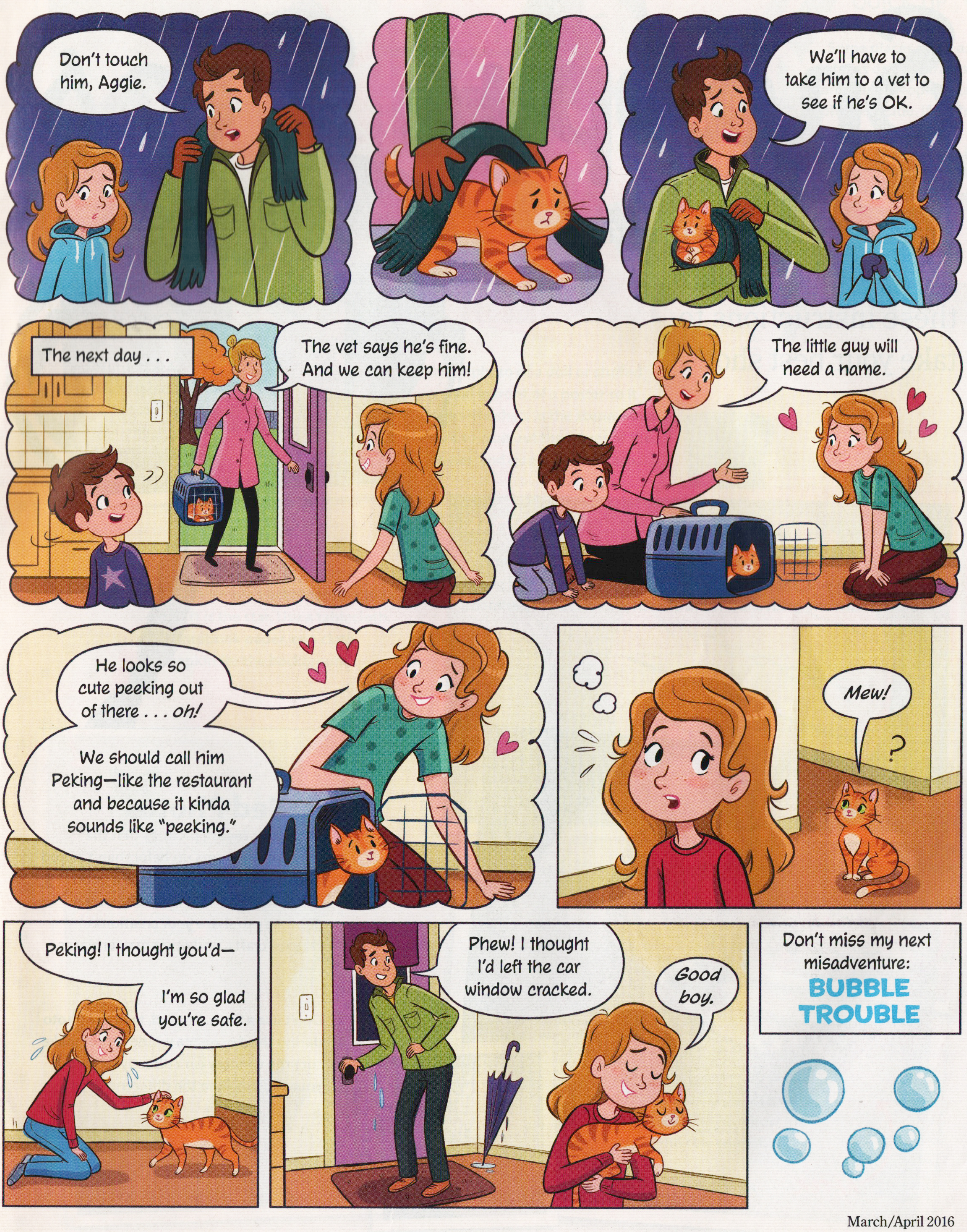
According to Aggie™

Cat-astrophe!

Illustrated by Genevieve Kote

Wait—a *cat*-astrophe? Is this about me?!


Can you put your bowl in the sink before you head upstairs?
Sure thing, Mom.
!!
Mom! WHERE'S Peking?!
And it's raining, just like that night . . .
Peking Palace
That fortune cookie was hilarious!
Mew!
Mew!
We have to help him!


Don't touch him, Aggie.
We'll have to take him to a vet to see if he's OK.
The next day . . .
The vet says he's fine. And we can keep him!
The little guy will need a name.
He looks so cute peeking out of there . . . *oh!*
We should call him Peking—like the restaurant and because it kinda sounds like "peeking."
Mew!
?
Peking! I thought you'd—
I'm so glad you're safe.
Phew! I thought I'd left the car window cracked.
Good boy.
Don't miss my next misadventure:
BUBBLE TROUBLE

Snappy Pics

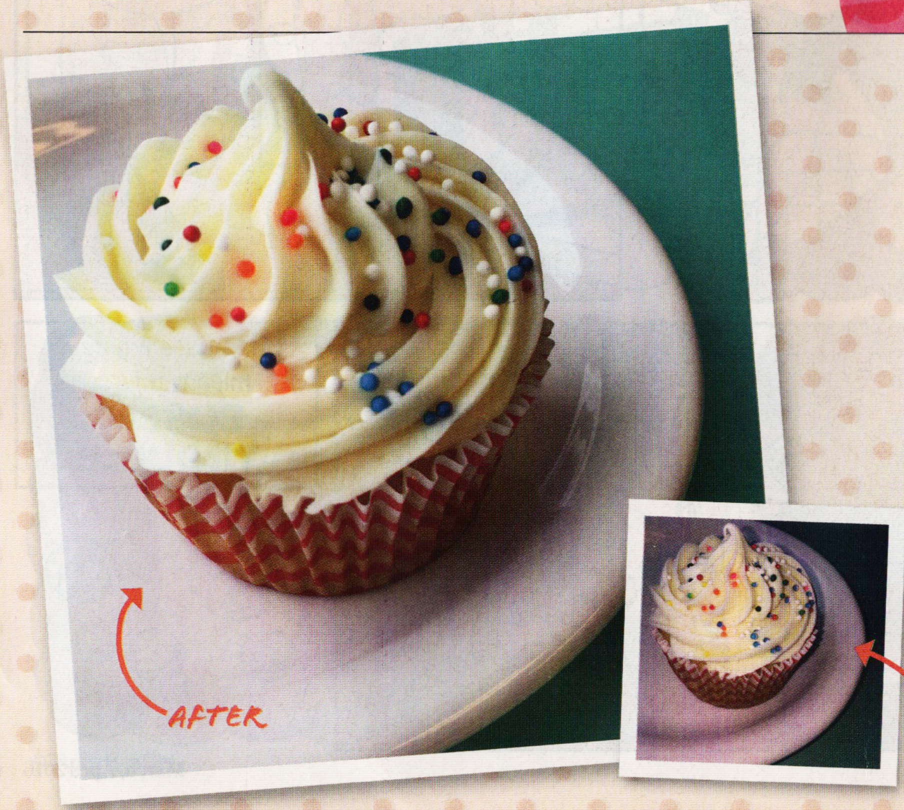
Practically a pro or first-time photographer? Follow these instructions to take your best shot!

QUICK TIP

Ask permission before taking photos of other people.

First Things First

Learn to operate your camera. Ask an adult to go over the camera's functions with you. Then practice! It takes a lot of not-so-good photos to end up with one great shot. Think of each photo as an experiment!

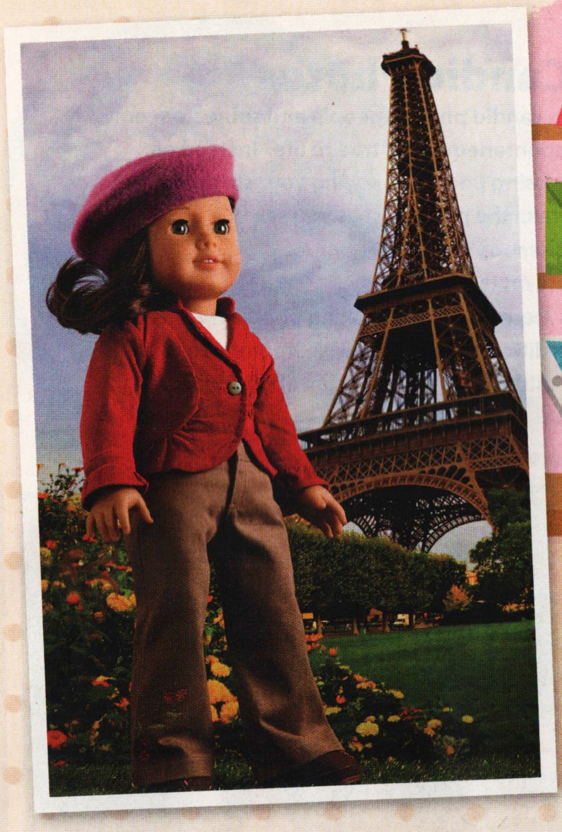


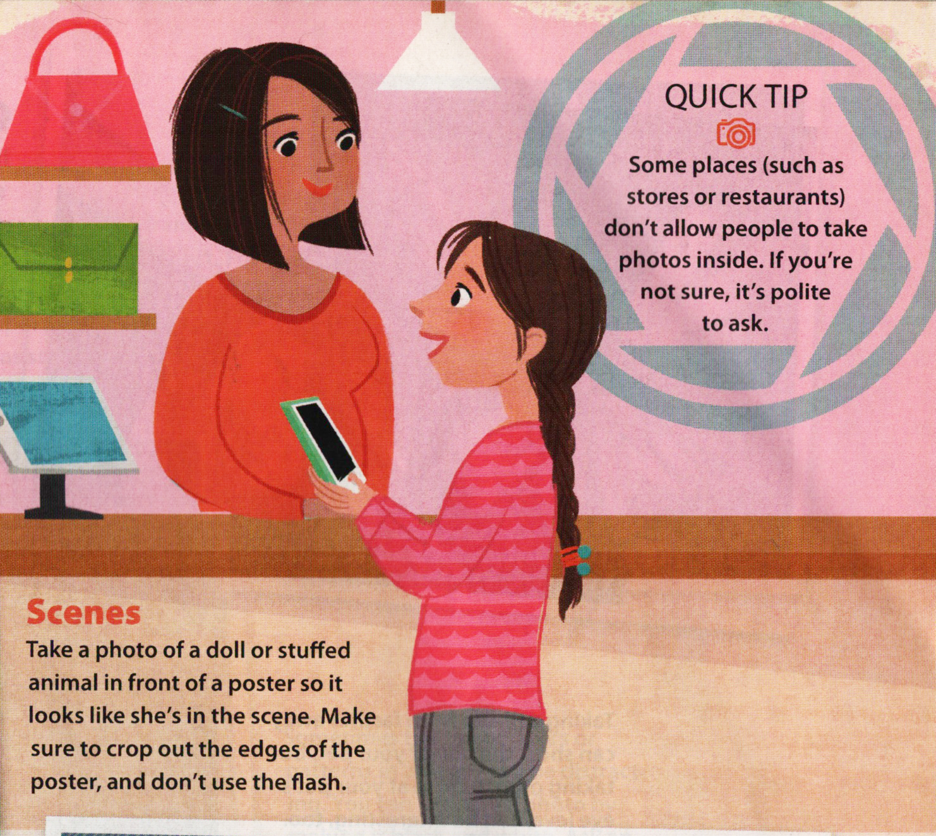
Styled Photos

Styled photos are pictures that the photographer sets up beforehand. (Food photography in magazines is a good example of this.) Styled photos are a great way to share your creations: recipes, crafts, and other masterpieces.

Treats

Don't use a flash. Instead, take the photo during the day near a window. (But make sure the window isn't directly behind your subject.) See the difference?





QUICK TIP

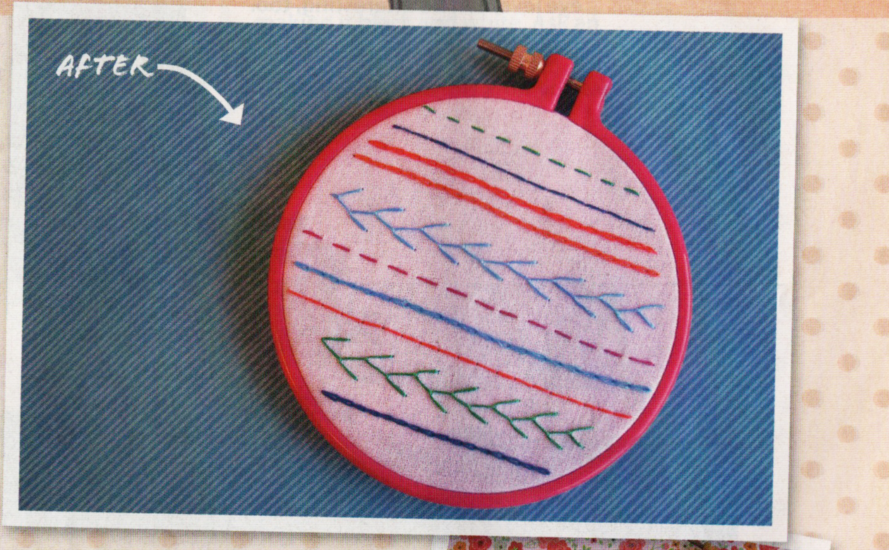
Some places (such as stores or restaurants) don't allow people to take photos inside. If you're not sure, it's polite to ask.

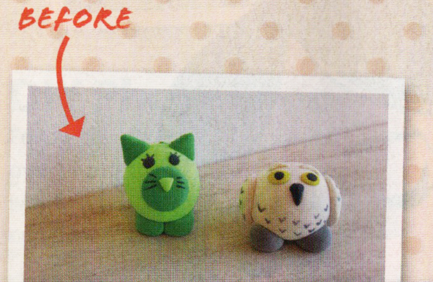
Scenes

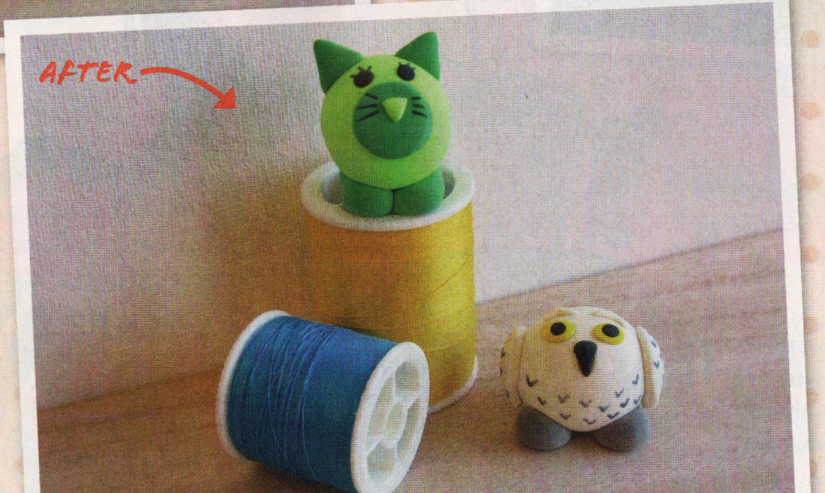
Take a photo of a doll or stuffed animal in front of a poster so it looks like she's in the scene. Make sure to crop out the edges of the poster, and don't use the flash.

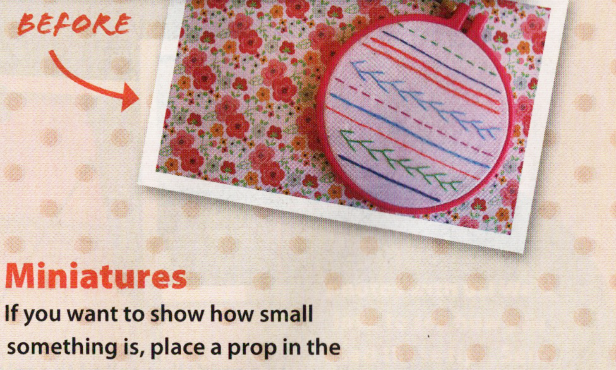
Crafts

Use a simple background so the craft is the star. Use a tablecloth, scrapbook paper, or a cloth napkin for the background.









Miniatures

If you want to show how small something is, place a prop in the shot to show scale. We used spools of thread to show the size of the clay animals.

Illustrations: Brenna Vaughan Additional credits on page 1.

Candid Photos

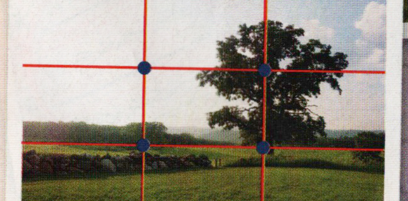
In candid photos, people and subjects seem spontaneous and true to life. Instead of posing people or styling your surroundings, take the photo just as you see it.

Friends

Experiment with taking photos from different angles and viewpoints: from the side, close up, and from above.

Pets

Taking a photo from farther away can show the size of your pet, but taking one up close at your pet's eye level can be interesting, too. Try both!



Landscape

Photographers often use a guideline called the rule of thirds. When taking a photo, imagine a grid of two vertical lines and two horizontal lines. The most important part of the photo should be along the lines or near one of the places where they cross.

QUICK TIP

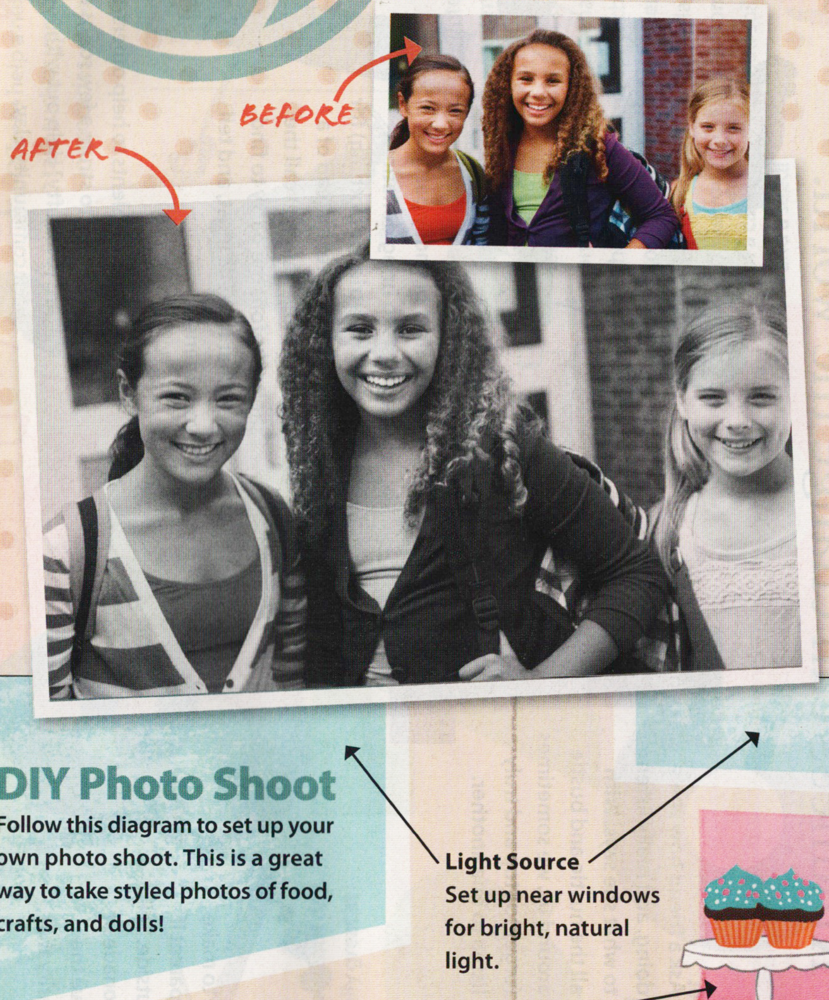
Respect your parents' rules for taking and sharing photos.

QUICK TIP

Photo editing apps can make good photos even better. Ask a parent to help find one that's right for you.

Nature

For a close-up, fill the frame by getting close to your subject. For zoomed-in photos like this, it's extra important to hold your camera as steady as you can.

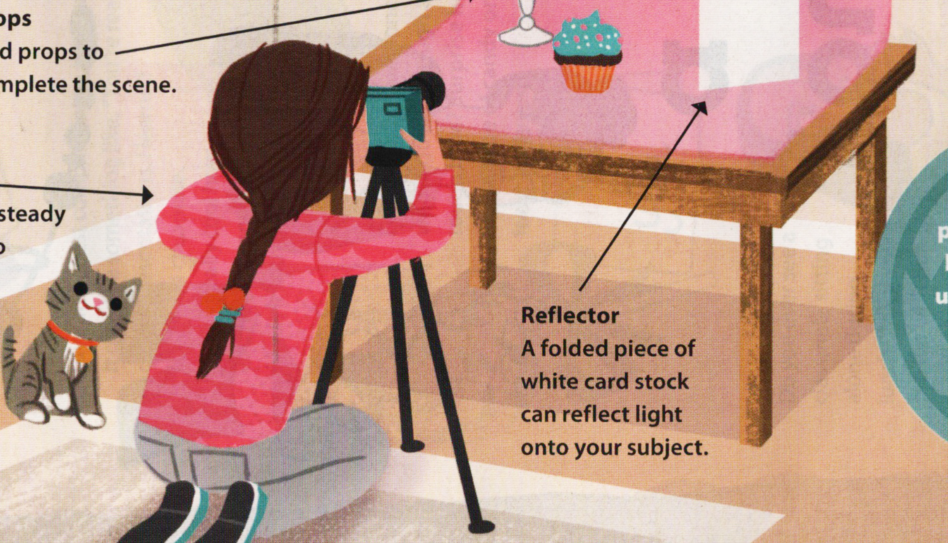


Black and White

Sometimes too many colors or patterns in a photo can be distracting. You can simplify a photo by making it black and white. Ask an adult to help you use a photo editing app to do this after you take the photo.

DIY Photo Shoot

Follow this diagram to set up your own photo shoot. This is a great way to take styled photos of food, crafts, and dolls!



Light Source
Set up near windows for bright, natural light.

Backdrop
Use fabric or paper for a colorful backdrop.

Props
Add props to complete the scene.

Camera and Tripod
A tripod will give you a steady shot and the freedom to make changes to the subject.

Reflector
A folded piece of white card stock can reflect light onto your subject.

Share your photos with us! We'd love to see how you used these tips. Send your photos to the address on page 7. ★

10 small things you can do to make a BIG difference

Kindness can change the world.

1

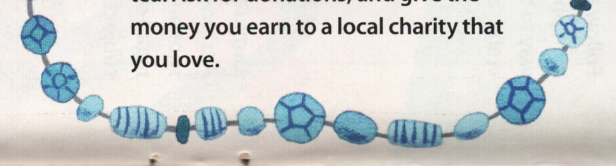
Ask a friend how she's doing, and really listen to what she says. With all the hustle and bustle around us, we sometimes forget to stop and truly listen to one another.

donate
DONATE

2

At your next birthday party, ask guests to bring donations (such as toiletries or clothing) for a homeless shelter instead of a present. Make sure you call the shelter before the party to find out what it needs most, and tell your friends.

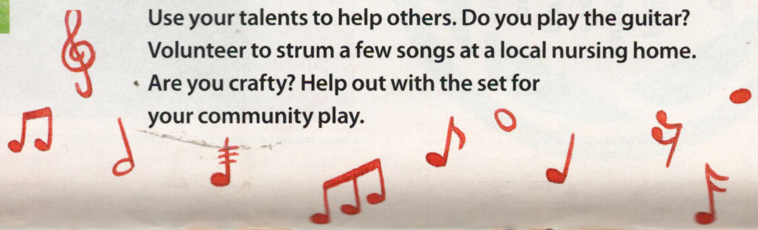
3

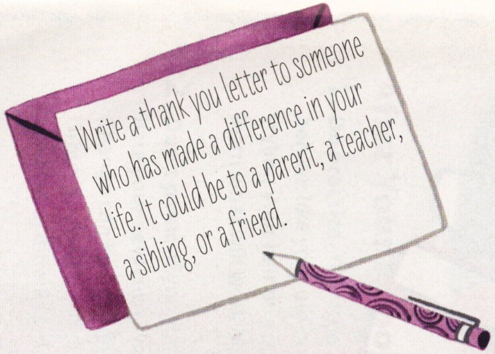


Use leftover string and beads to make bracelets with a friend. Ask a parent if you can set up a craft table outside. Sell your bracelets alongside lemonade or tea. Ask for donations, and give the money you earn to a local charity that you love.

4

Use your talents to help others. Do you play the guitar? Volunteer to strum a few songs at a local nursing home. Are you crafty? Help out with the set for your community play.



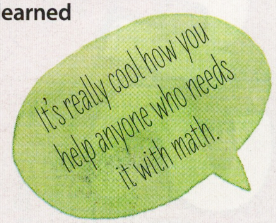


Write a thank you letter to someone who has made a difference in your life. It could be to a parent, a teacher, a sibling, or a friend.

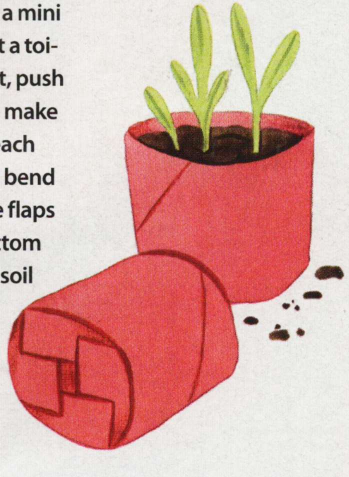
Offer to help a neighbor with a task such as yard work, carrying in groceries, or dog walking.

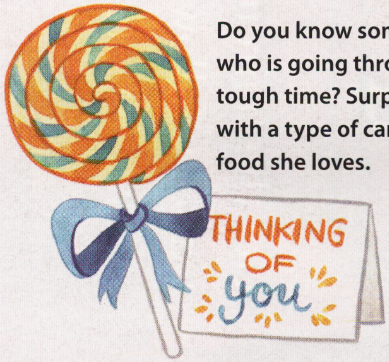
Illustrations: Julia Bereciartu

Give an honest compliment to someone each day. It could be something like, "You're really great at giving presentations. I learned a lot!" to a classmate. Or, "It's really cool how you help anyone who needs it with math."



Earth Day is April 22. Brighten your teacher's desk with a mini planter. To make one, cut a toilet paper roll in half. Next, push on the sides of the roll to make them more square. Cut each corner of the square and bend the flaps. Finally, fold the flaps in like you would the bottom of a cardboard box. Add soil and a seed!





Do you know someone who is going through a tough time? Surprise her with a type of candy or food she loves.

Do you ever see a classmate sitting alone during lunch? Ask if you can eat with him or her and make a new friend.

Don't forget to be kind to yourself, too. Spend time doing the things that make you happy. ★

Style with a Smile

Get the haircut you want by following a few easy steps.

Before Your Appointment

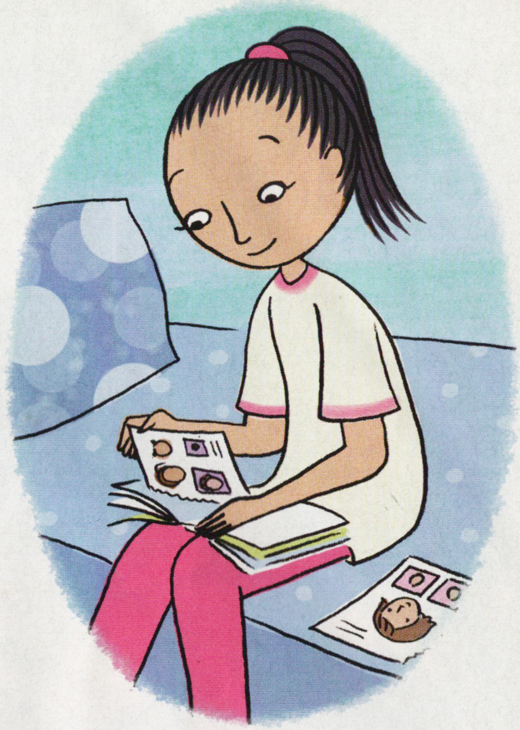
1. Be prepared. It's much easier to show a picture of the style you want than it is to describe it. Find a picture of someone who has a style you like and who has hair like yours.

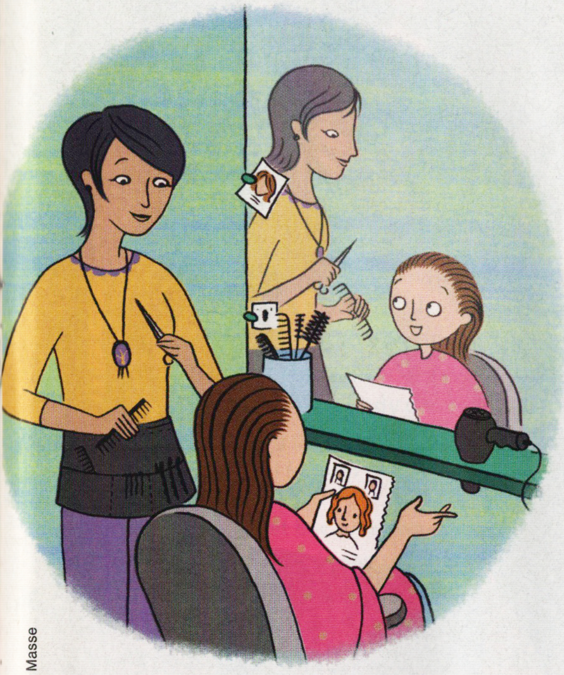
2. Be curious. Ask the stylist if the cut you want will work for your hair and what you'll have to do to style it.

3. Be clear. Point to the spot where you'd like the cut hair to end instead of speaking in "inches." It's also OK to ask the stylist to tell you what she plans to do.

4. Be sure. After talking with your stylist, if you aren't feeling confident that you'll end up with a style that will make you happy, it's OK to decide not to do what you and the stylist have discussed.

To speak up for yourself and change the plan, say this: "Actually, I might not be ready for this change. Let's do a trim instead. Just a little shorter—to here" and point to how short you want the cut. You can decide later if you still want to try something different.





During Your Appointment

1. Speak up. Feel free to speak to the stylist during the cut. Don't be afraid to start a conversation! If you are uncomfortable, say so, such as if the water is too hot when your hair is being washed or if a clip is digging into your scalp.

2. Sit up. Be as still as you can in the stylist's chair, and sit up straight. Keep an eye on things in the mirror.

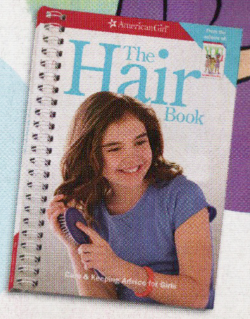
3. Speak up again. If you are worried about how things are going or are not sure about the cut, here's what to say: "Can you tell me how that's going to look when it's dry? I'd like it to look this way" and explain clearly. Go back to your pictures if needed.

After Your Appointment

1. Do practice. Your new cut may not behave like your old one. Practice styling your hair on your own, and learn what will work best for you.

2. Don't panic: If you think you may hate your new cut, give it a little time. Change can be uncomfortable. Often, you just need to get used to something different. After some time, if you feel your new style truly isn't working, talk it over with a parent. A trip back to your stylist (or trying a new one) might help.

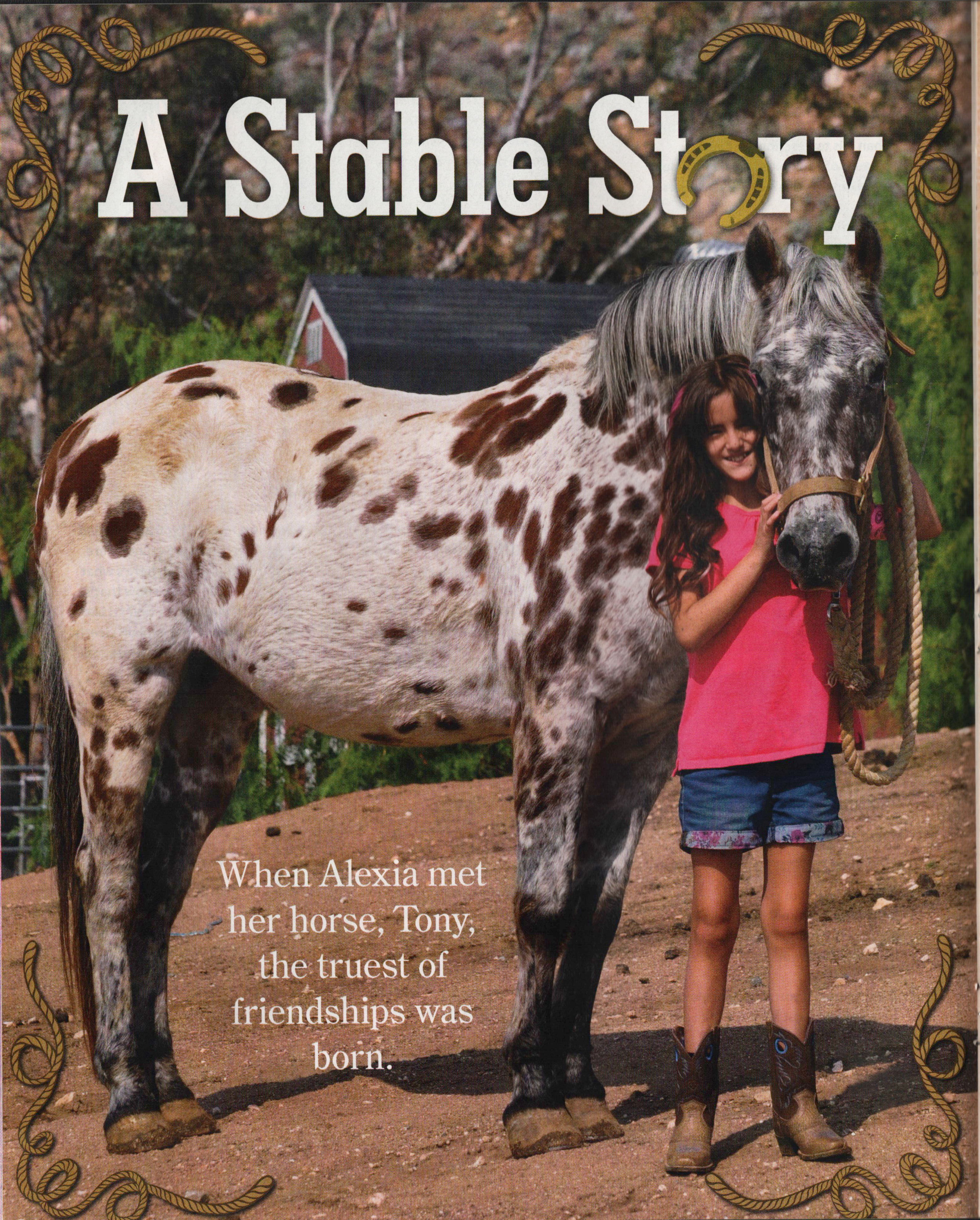
3. Do enjoy. Try out new styles and hair accessories—a fresh haircut is fun!



More hair-care advice can be found in ***The Hair Book.*** ★

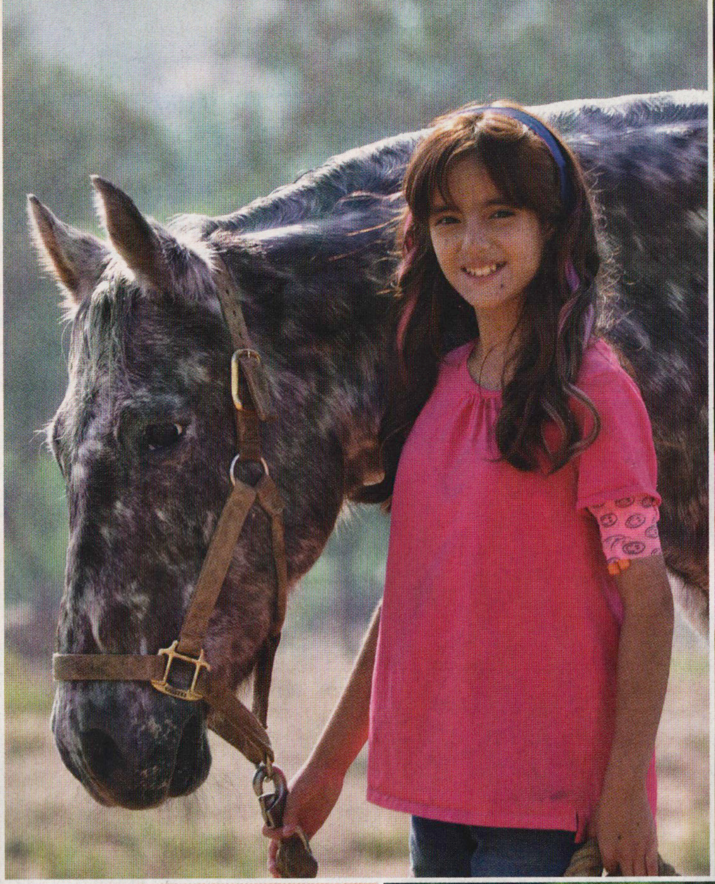
Photo: Steven Talley Styling: Aubre Andrus, Susie Lee Illustrations: Josée Masse

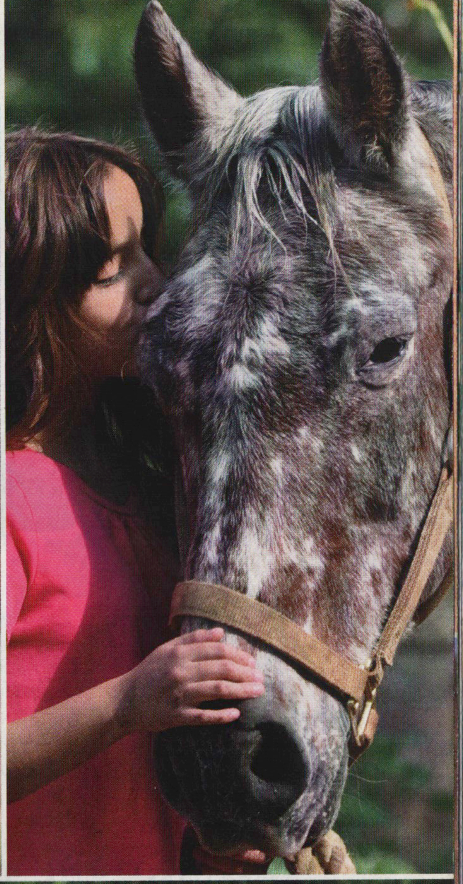
A Stable Story



When Alexia met her horse, Tony, the truest of friendships was born.

I have the best, best friend ever. His name is Tony. When we first brought him home to California, he came with the name "Tony D." But my mom and I thought he needed something a little more special. We changed his name to "A Tony Delight." That's an old-fashioned way of saying he's fancy.





Tony *is* fancy. He's a beautiful Appaloosa, a kind of horse with spots. And he is really sweet. I mean, really, *really* sweet. He likes it when I brush him and talk to him and scratch inside his ears. He also likes running and rolling in the field.

Tony and I have a lot in common. We both love to trail-ride up in the dry, rolling foothills near our ranch and see the wild burros that live up there. But there's more. We also both have health issues, which means that we both need special diets. Unlike most horses, Tony can't eat grass or grain because he's *insulin resistant*. That means his body doesn't process sugar in the normal way. Eating grass makes him overweight and so sick that it becomes painful for him to walk.

I have a special diet because I was born without intestines. Without them, my body can't absorb the nutrition that I need to grow. I get nutrition from a tube that goes directly to my stomach and an IV that goes directly to my heart. I don't love being hooked up to an IV every night for 12 hours. But without it, I'd be in the hospital. The good news is that I can still eat my favorite foods, like hamburgers, bacon, and popcorn. And of course, Tony loves to eat, too. We feed him special hay and scoops of sunflower seeds. He gobbles down every bite and then licks his bucket clean.

* * *

We adopted Tony in 2014 after I outgrew my miniature horse, Misty. My mom had been searching rescue organizations for a horse that was a better size for me. She read about Tony online. He was more than 2,000 miles away at a horse rescue in Kentucky. His special needs made it hard for him to find a home. Tony needed to live in a place with no grass. Where we live in California, everything is hot and dry. We knew we could give him the perfect home.

> "It made me happy to see my friend. It's nice to have someone who shares your problems."

I watched over my mom's shoulder as she filled out the application on the computer. It wasn't long before the rescue approved us to adopt Tony. I was so excited. Soon he was on his way out west.

When Tony arrived, he was hungry, tired, and thirsty. We put him in his corral in the shade and let him settle in for a few days. I brushed him and told him how happy I was to meet him. I led him around the ranch and introduced him to all of our other animals—the horses, llamas, chickens, cats, quail, a sheep, and a dog. He seemed to like it at our place.

It wasn't long before I started riding Tony. These days, we're taking lessons, and soon we'll be learning to barrel race. Sometimes we just head out and ride the trails carved out by the wild burros.

I'm home-schooled, so I spend a lot of time with Tony and the other animals. Every morning, I give him breakfast. In the

evening, when I go to the corral to feed the horses, I hang out with Tony for a while. He shoves his nose in his bucket to eat and comes out with food on his face and makes me laugh. Then he looks into my eyes and listens while I talk. Sometimes he nibbles my shirt or nudges me with his nose. Sometimes we watch a coyote or a bobcat sneak by.

* * *

Last summer, it was hard when I had to be in the hospital for two weeks. I was in isolation because they couldn't figure out what had caused my blood to get infected. I missed Tony and all the other animals a lot. When I finally got home, I had to go straight to bed. But first thing in the morning, I went out to check on Tony. Of course, he was standing there waiting for me. It made me happy to see my friend. It's nice to have someone who shares your problems. Being different and having to deal with health problems is no big deal for Tony and me. He has his special diet, and I have my special diet. We get each other through. I'm so lucky to have him.

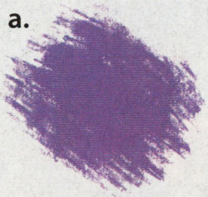
Sometimes people see me and think, with my medical issues, I couldn't possibly ride a horse. But when I'm riding Tony, especially up in the mountains, I feel free. It's like I have no problems at all. And people who see me then see only a girl out there having a good time on a horse. I guess that's one thing that I've learned from Tony—that you can always find a way to do what you love. I'm so grateful to my mom for bringing him home to me. I think it was meant to be. ★

DESIGN Decoder

Which bedroom design matches your personality?
Find out with our quiz.

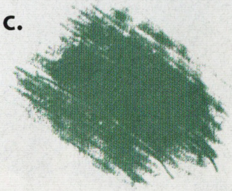
1. Which color?

a.



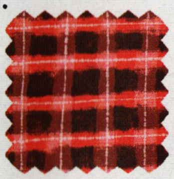
b.

c.

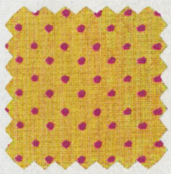


2. Which pattern?

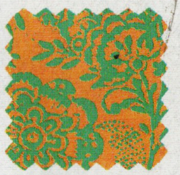
a.



b.

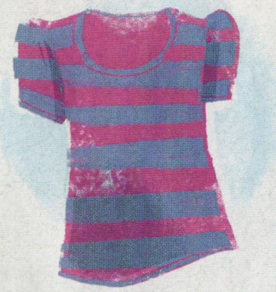


c.

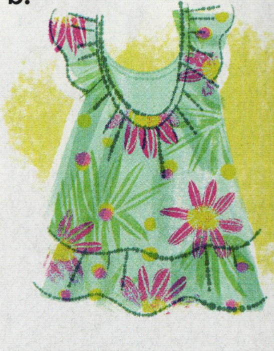


3. Which shirt?

a.



b.



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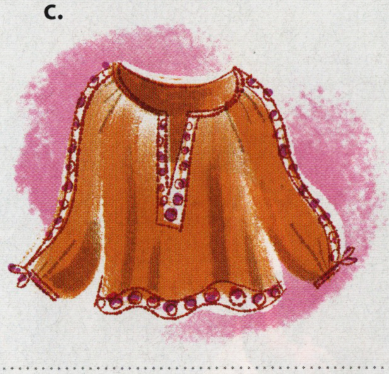
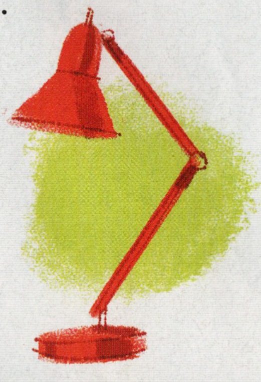
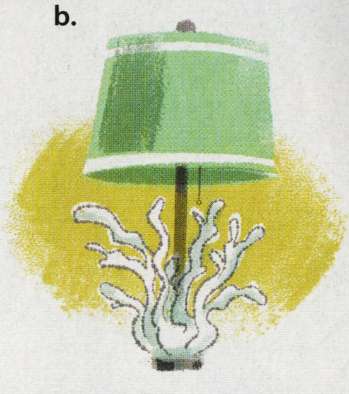


4. Which lamp?

a.



b.



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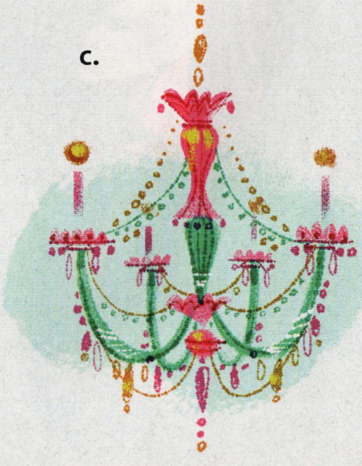
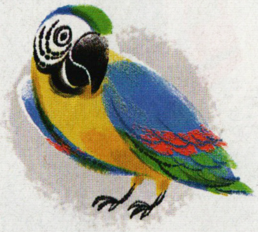


5. Which bird?

a.



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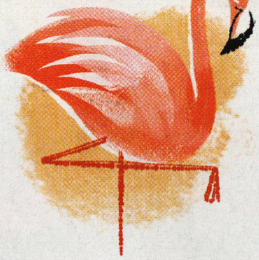
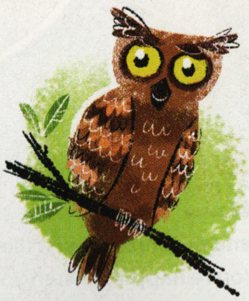
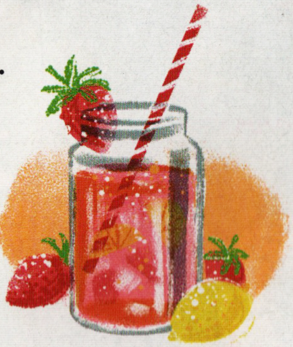


c.

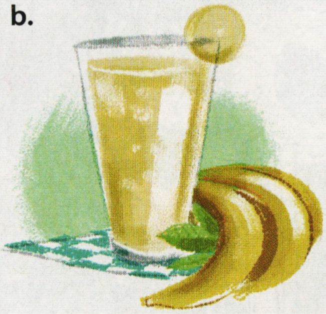


6. Which drink?

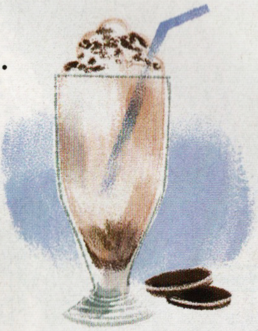
a.



b.

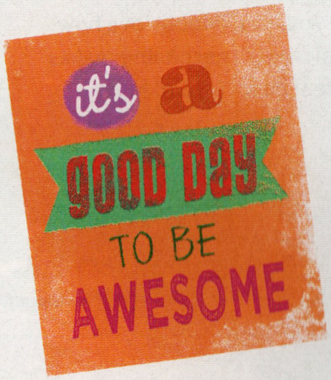


c.

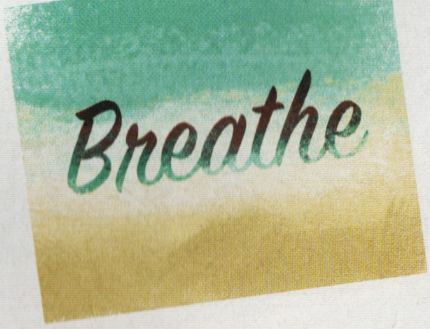


7. Which poster?

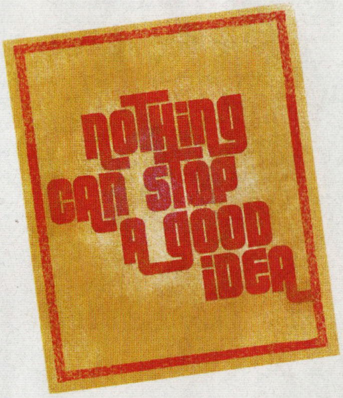
a.


it's a
GOOD DAY
TO BE
AWESOME

b.

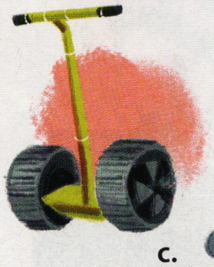


c.

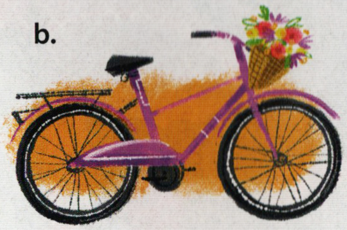

NOTHING
CAN STOP
A GOOD
IDEA

8. Which vehicle?

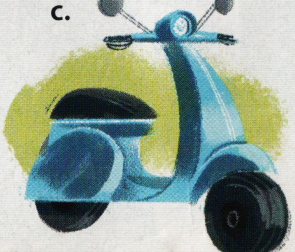
a.



b.

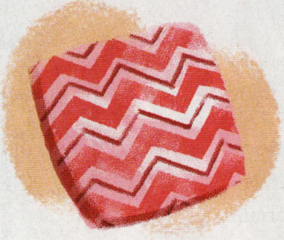


c.

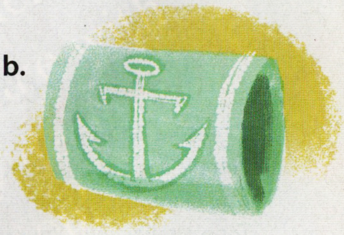


9. Which pillow?

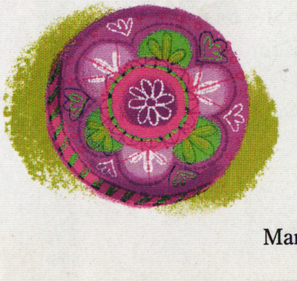
a.



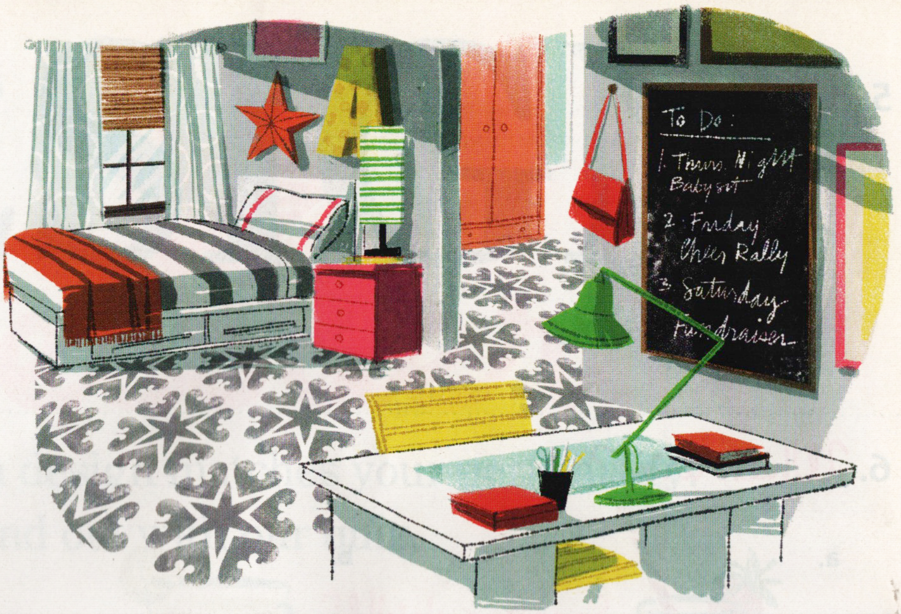
b.



c.



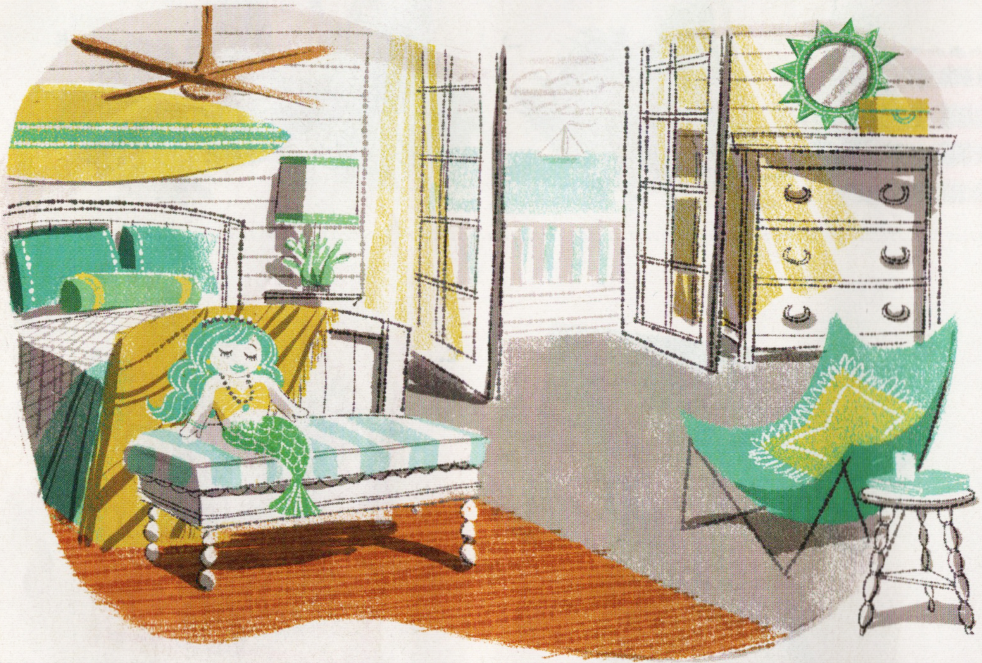
Illustrations: Marilena Perilli


To Do:
1. Thurs. Night Babysit
2. Friday Cheer Rally
3. Saturday Fundraiser

Mostly a's

Active & Awesome

Bold, bright, and organized—just like your personality! You're happiest when you're busy and productive, and your friends know you as a girl who gets things done.



Mostly b's

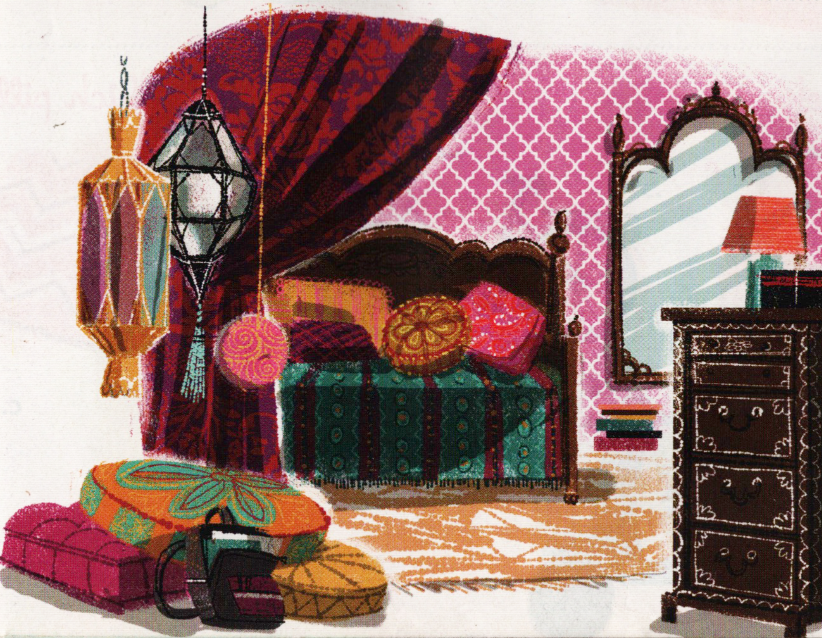
Beachy & Breezy

This room is relaxing and chill—like a deep breath of fresh air. That's you, too! People love how your laid-back personality makes them feel peaceful and happy.

Mostly c's

Creative & Cozy

Here is a room that sparks imagination and inspires creativity—a great match for a girl like you. Your quirky personality is reflected in the one-of-a-kind style you're known for. ★

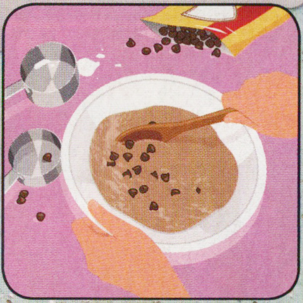


Cocoa Cake

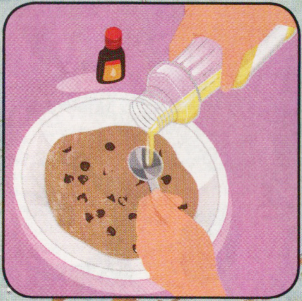
Mix up a homemade chocolate cake with a sugary design on top!

You Will Need:

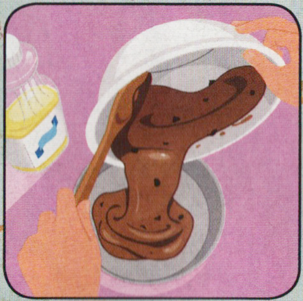
- 1½ cups flour
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ⅓ cup baking cocoa
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup chocolate chips
- 6 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup cold water
- ⅓ cup powdered sugar



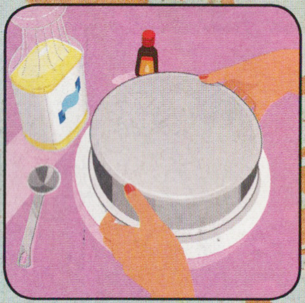
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Measure the flour, sugar, cocoa, baking soda, salt, and chocolate chips into a mixing bowl. Stir until combined.



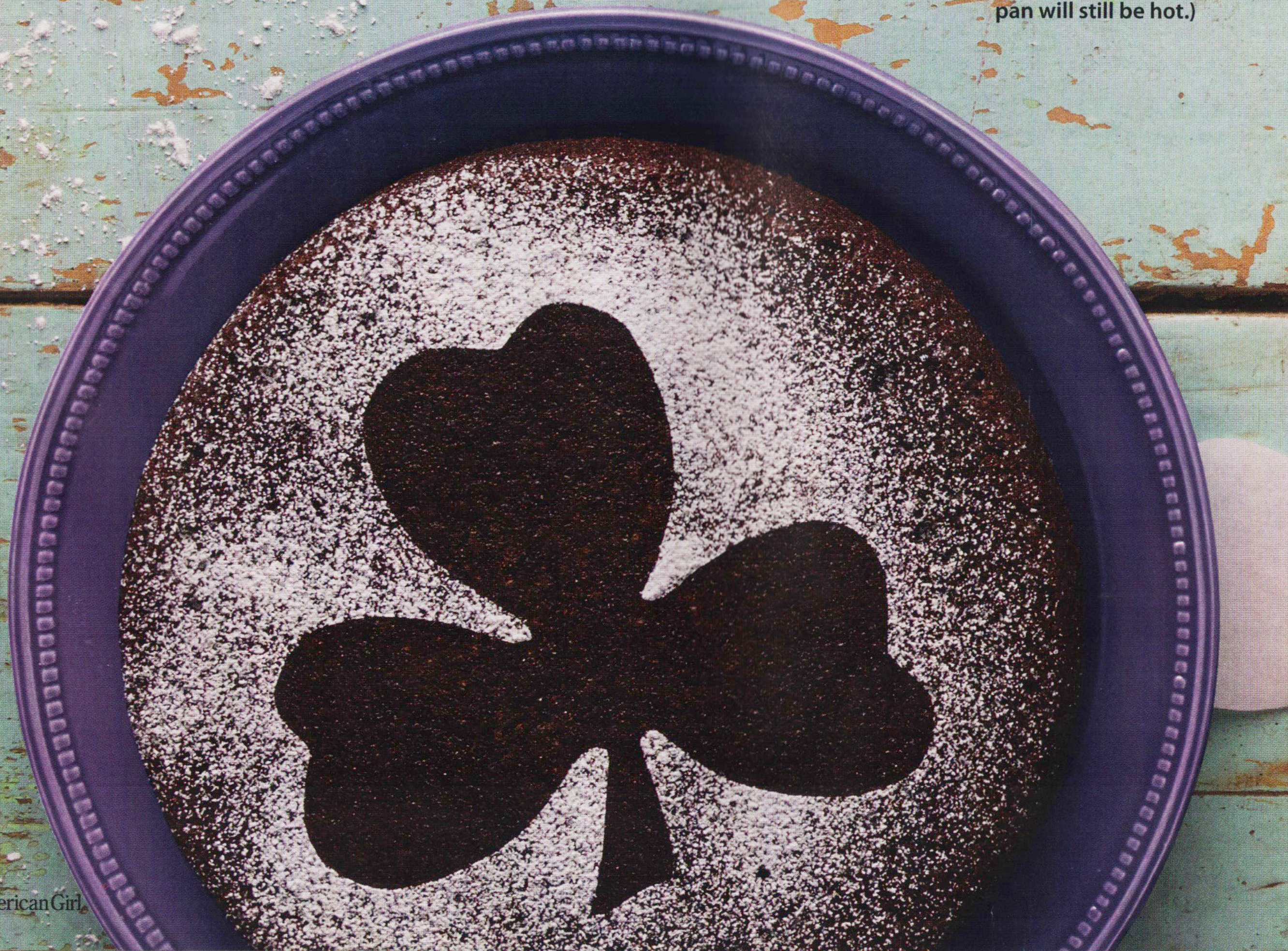
2. Add the oil, vinegar, vanilla, and water to the dry ingredients. Stir until the wet and dry ingredients are combined.



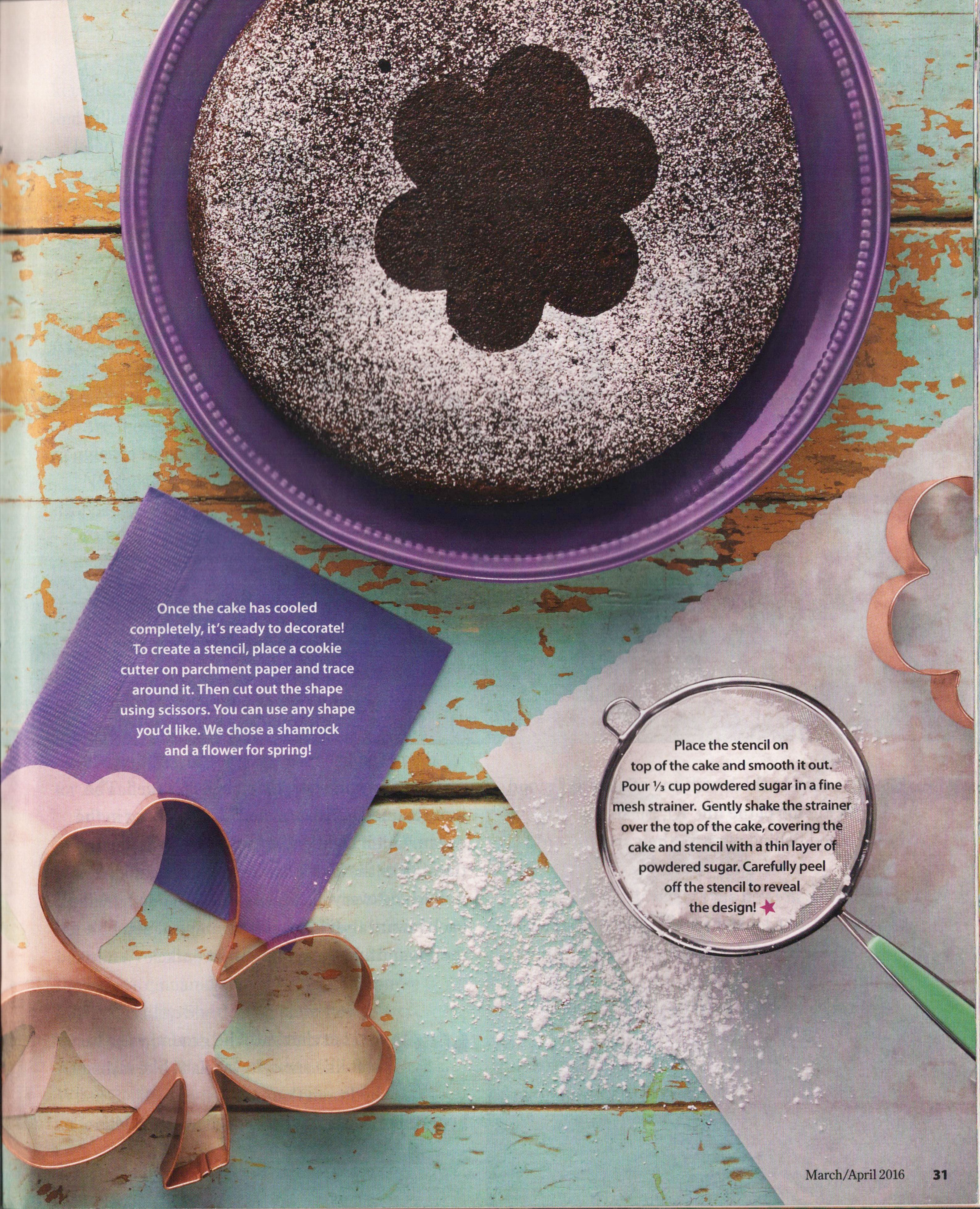
3. ✋ Pour the batter into a greased and floured 9-inch round pan. Ask an adult to bake the cake for 25–30 minutes, or until a toothpick poked into the cake comes out clean.



4. ✋ Let the cake cool in the pan for about 30 minutes. Then ask an adult to remove the cake from the pan by turning it upside-down on a plate. (Careful! The pan will still be hot.)

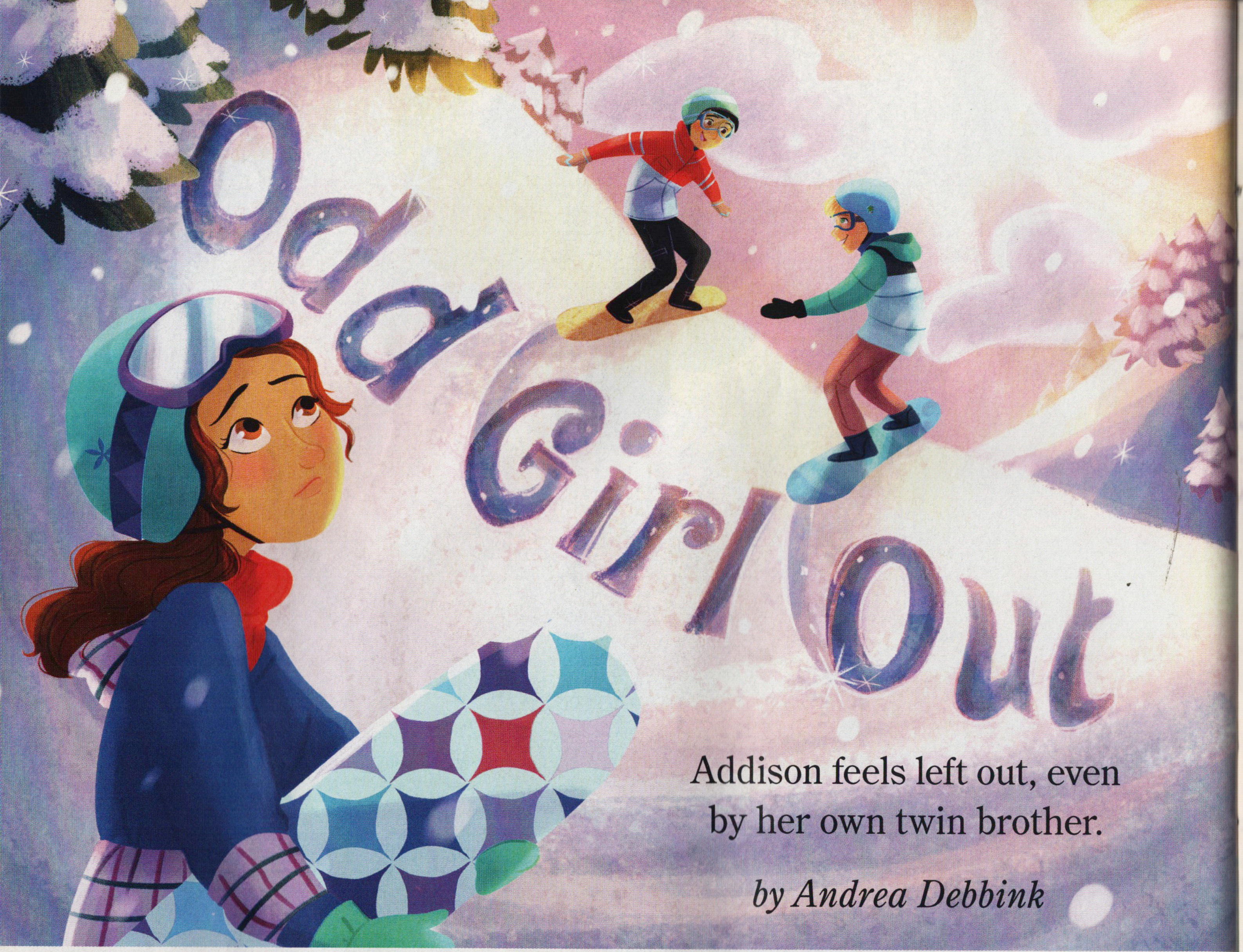


Photos: Chris Hynes Photography Illustrations: Monika Roe Styling: Andrea Debbink



Once the cake has cooled completely, it's ready to decorate! To create a stencil, place a cookie cutter on parchment paper and trace around it. Then cut out the shape using scissors. You can use any shape you'd like. We chose a shamrock and a flower for spring!

Place the stencil on top of the cake and smooth it out. Pour ⅓ cup powdered sugar in a fine mesh strainer. Gently shake the strainer over the top of the cake, covering the cake and stencil with a thin layer of powdered sugar. Carefully peel off the stencil to reveal the design! ★



Odd Girl Out

Addison feels left out, even by her own twin brother.

by Andrea Debbink

The air was thick with snowflakes as I stood at the top of the hill. AJ, Blake, and Hailey stood behind me with their snowboards, waiting.

“Addison, are you sure you want to do this?” Hailey said. She looked scared. Even though she was my best friend, I was worried she’d run and tell my mom. For my own good, she’d say.

“She won’t,” Blake said. “She’s too scared.” I was nervous, but my brother AJ and his friend Blake had dared me. Blake said that a girl would never go off a jump this big. He knew nothing about girls.

I slid away and quickly picked up speed. The jump loomed in front of me like an iceberg in the ocean. I hit it and flew, spinning and twisting in the air like the snowboarders on TV. I couldn’t wait to see everyone’s faces when I landed. I fell back toward the earth, still spinning. Then I hit the ground and everything went dark.

◆ ◆ ◆

“Ow!” I exclaimed. The ground wasn’t soft like snow. It was hard like my bedroom floor.

I opened my eyes and broke free from my blankets. In my sleep, I had spun myself into a cocoon and fallen right off the bed. So much for flying.

Loud voices echoed in the hall. It was AJ and Blake. AJ is my twin, but, no, we don't look alike, and, no, we can't read each other's minds. If we could, I would have blocked my door in time.

The boys burst into the room.

"Where are my goggles?" AJ asked. Instead of waiting for an answer, he started digging through my bag.

"Hey! Leave my stuff alone!" I said. "I don't have your goggles."

"Are these yours?" Blake dangled my purple goggles in front of AJ. "Why are they a *girl* color?"

"No, those are Addison's," AJ said. Blake dropped them to the floor.

"Get OUT of my room!" I was about to explode.

"I still don't have . . ."

"MOM!"

"Fine! Calm down."

The boys backed out of the room. AJ knew better than to get in trouble right before vacation. I slammed the door behind them. Some people think that having a twin is like having a built-in best friend. Maybe for some people it is, but not for AJ and me. Well, not these days anyway.

I checked the clock. In exactly fifty-seven minutes, we would be on our way to one of my favorite places in the whole wide world: Manitou Mountain. This year our parents let us each invite a friend on our annual spring break trip—five days of snowboarding, roasting marshmallows, and drinking the lodge's cinnamon hot chocolate. Of course I invited Hailey. She doesn't know how to snowboard yet, but I can fix that. Unfortunately for me, AJ had invited Blake, the worst of his new friends. When Blake's around, I'm pretty much invisible. At least with Hailey along, that won't matter.

Illustrations: Monique Dong

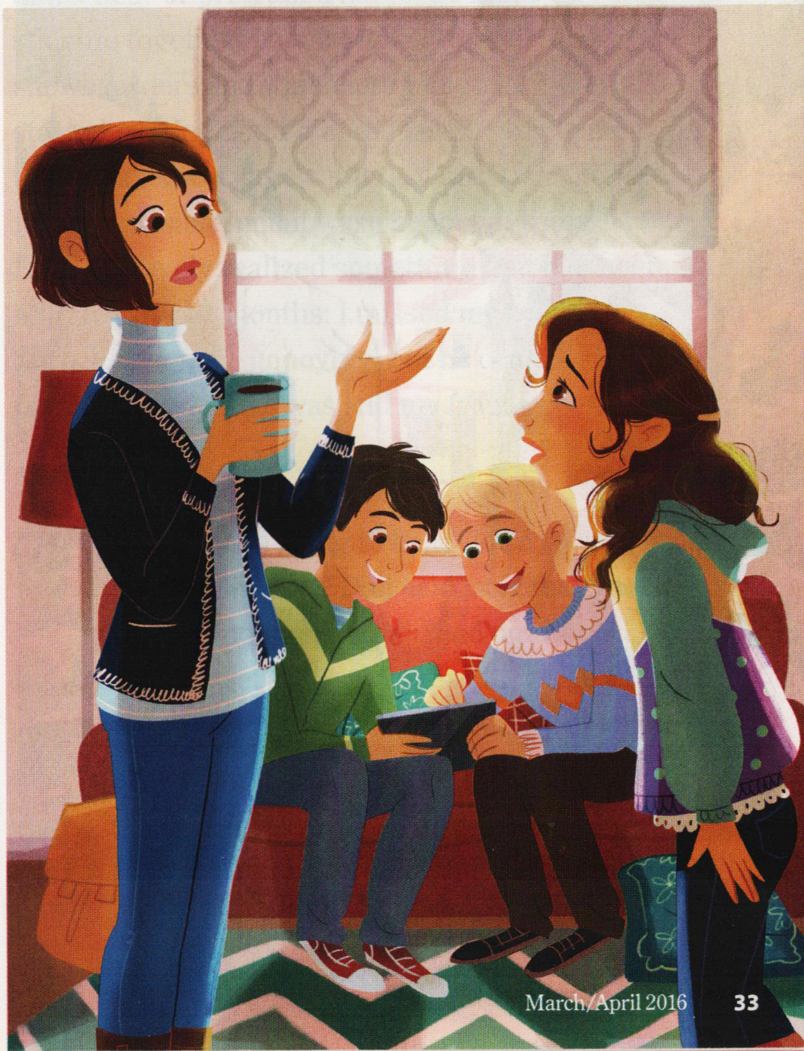
Thirty minutes later, I dragged my duffel downstairs and threw it on the heap by the front door. AJ and Blake were huddled over a tablet playing a game that had screeching monkeys and a *boi-ing*! Mom came out of the kitchen, drinking coffee and frowning. "Honey, I've got some bad news," she said. "Hailey's mom just called, and Hailey woke up with a stomach bug this morning."

"What? Hailey's sick?!"

Boi-ing! Boi-ing!

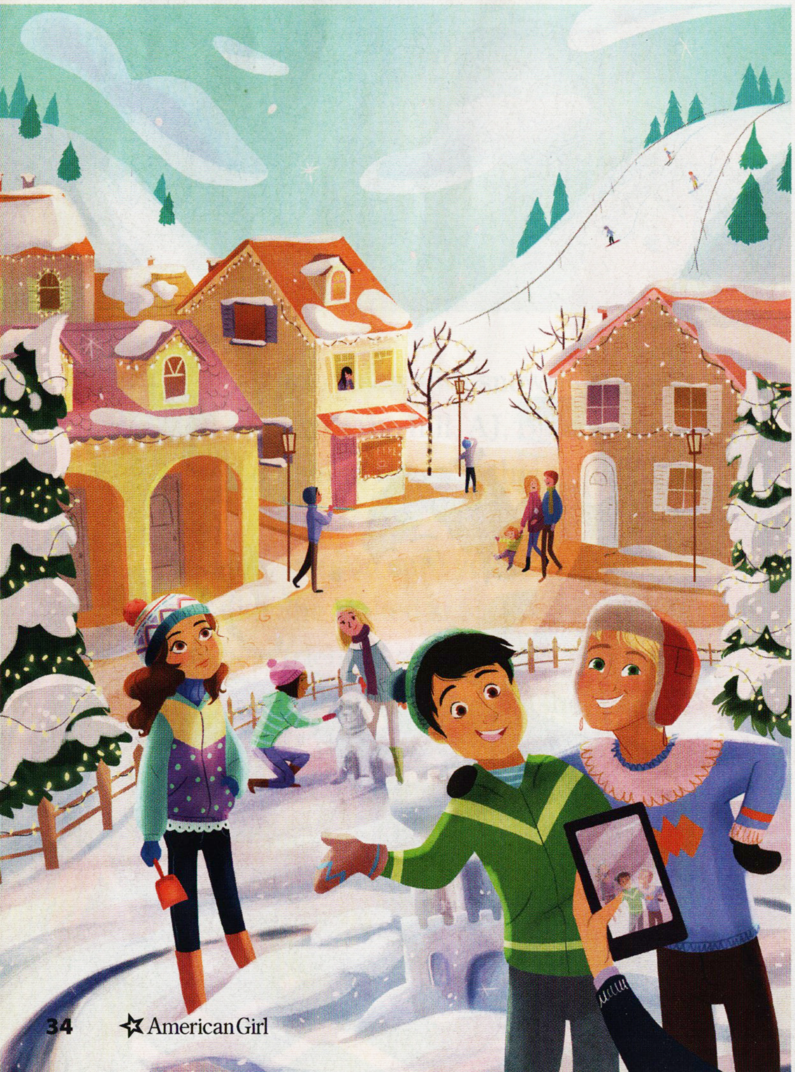
"Yeah. I'm sorry, Addie-bean. I know how much you wanted her to come with us," Mom said. "Poor Hailey."

Yeah, poor Hailey, I thought. But poor me, too. It was too late to invite someone else. And also too late to *un*invite Blake.



By the time we reached the lodge, I was a teeny tiny bit happy. Sure, AJ and I fought over the best seat in the car (I won. I think Mom and Dad felt bad for me.) And then he and Blake ate the last of the chocolate-covered granola bars while I was sleeping, and had the volume on their game turned up way too loud. But it was hard to be in a bad mood once Manitou Mountain came into view. The snow was deeper and whiter here. Not like the dirty gray slush that lined the streets back home. The main street was covered in twinkling lights, so it looked like a sparkly gingerbread town from a fairy tale. I decided to make the best of it, even without Hailey.

That might have worked if I had ignored AJ and Blake, but my parents tried their best to make the three of us get along. Their first attempt was to sign us up for a snow-sculpture contest at the town's winter carnival, hoping we'd work together. AJ and I used to spend hours building things together—entire cities out of blocks that covered the kitchen table. That was before I became invisible.



Trouble started right away. The judges handed out buckets and shovels, and told us we had thirty minutes to create a snow sculpture.

"Let's build a medieval castle," AJ said, already starting to dig.

"A castle? Everyone's going to build that," I said. "Let's think of something else."

"Like what?"

"I don't know. How about a tiger?" I started digging, too. I could see the tiger in my mind. I'm not sure how we'd make the stripes, but maybe . . .

"Nah, a castle's cooler," Blake said. Right away the two of them started building the castle's towers and planning the outside wall. They had also taken all the good tools.

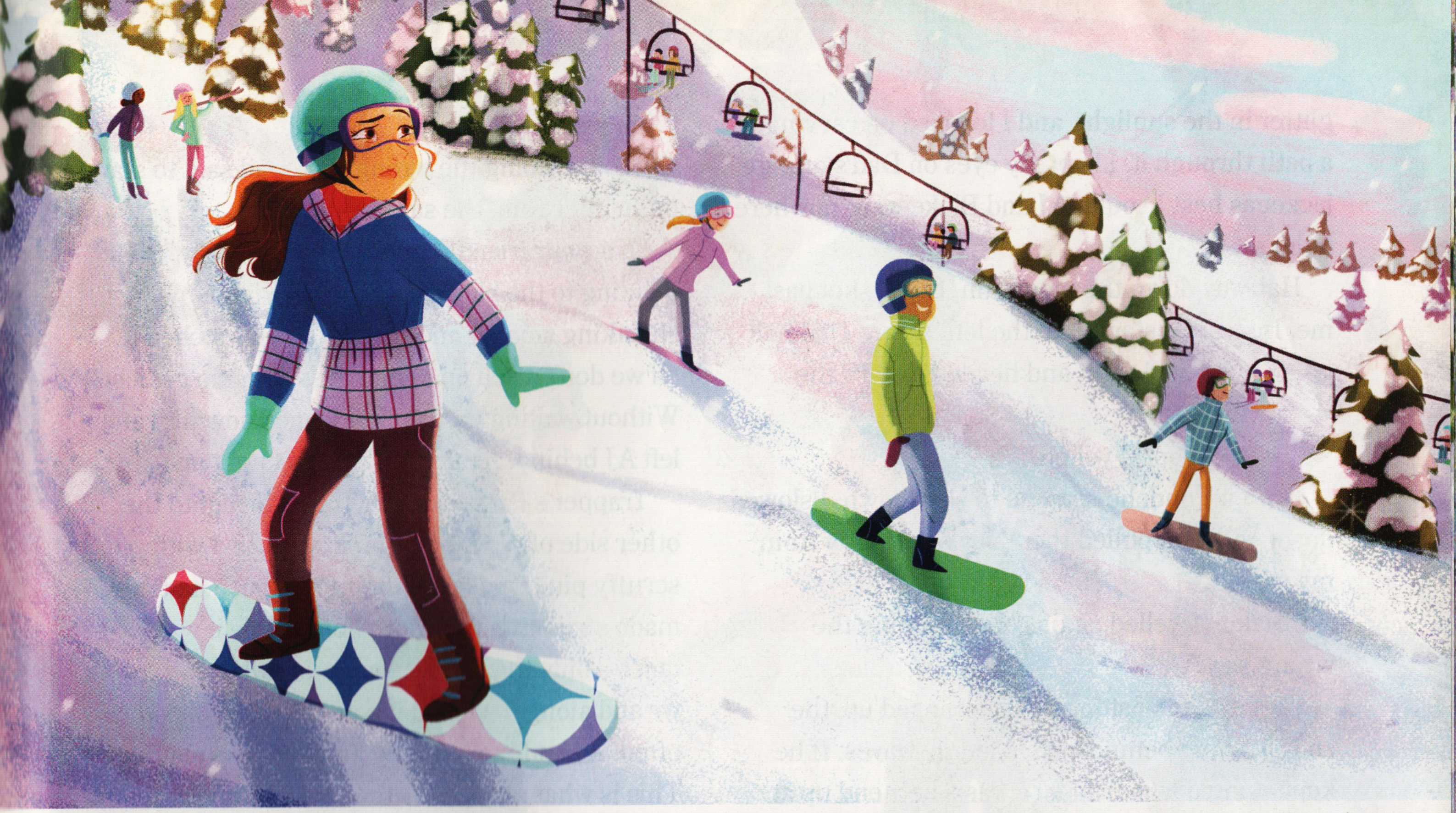
"What am I supposed to do?" I asked.

"You could dig the moat," AJ said without looking up. I took the only shovel left and started digging. Two other groups were building castles, too. No one was making a tiger. When the time was up, I had finished the moat, but the boys had only half finished the rest of the castle.

"We needed more time," they said.

"Or more help," I said. AJ shrugged, then asked Mom to take a picture of him and Blake by the not-quite-finished castle.

"Addison, should we send a photo to Hailey?" Mom asked. She let me take the picture, but then her phone wouldn't send it. Cell phones don't always work in the mountains. Mom assured me we'd try again later, but it still felt like we were stranded on an island, cut off from my friends.



The next morning Mom and Dad left us at the bunny hill on our own. "Stay here and stick together," they said. Right. I got in line at the towrope. AJ and Blake were already way ahead of me, but I could hear them talking and laughing. Not long ago that was AJ and me, I thought. When we were younger, AJ and I did everything together. We were always different—right down to our hair color and favorite toys—but we got along. Since we started middle school, things haven't been the same. We're more different than ever. No more city building or shared friends. Plus, we've been arguing a lot.

As I grabbed the towrope, it started to snow, little specks of sugar at first that quickly turned to clumps of soft feathers. I wished Hailey was here to see it instead of drinking ginger ale and sleeping on her couch. I'd try to send her another picture if I could.

At the top of the hill, AJ and Blake were pushing off. "Hey! Wait up!" I yelled. But they either didn't hear or pretended not to. So much for sticking together. I sank into a crowd of other snowboarders and watched them go. My eyes started to sting and I blinked fast, trying to stop the tears I knew were coming. This wasn't about feeling invisible, and it wasn't about missing Hailey. I finally realized something that had been bugging me for months: I missed my brother. Sure, he could be annoying, but he could be fun too, and I wished he was still my friend.

◆ ◆ ◆

"We're going to head down to lift five," Dad said later that afternoon as we adjusted our boots and helmets. "If we get separated, just stay on Juniper Run, OK?" AJ and Blake were too busy throwing snow in each other's faces to listen.

We were off. The run was crowded with other snowboarders and skiers, but I didn't mind. The fresh snow from that morning turned to white glitter in the sunlight, and I focused on carving a path through it. I kept my eyes on Dad's orange jacket as best I could. AJ and Blake were nowhere to be seen.

Halfway down the mountain, Blake shot past me. Instead of staying to the left, where Dad had gone, he veered right and headed toward the wrong turnoff.

"Blake! Stop!" I yelled.

For a second, he seemed to slow down. I slowed down, too, and pulled the fuzzy scarf away from my mouth.

"Blake!" I yelled again. "You're going the wrong way!"

But instead of stopping, Blake sped up, the snow curling behind him in foamy waves. If he kept going down Trapper's Pass, he'd end up at the wrong chairlift and wouldn't be able to find his way back to the lodge. For a second I thought about letting him go. Good riddance. But then I thought about how losing Blake would pretty much ruin the day. Instead of more snowboarding and pizza at the lodge, we'd spend the rest of the afternoon combing the mountain for Blake. We might even have to call the ski patrol to go after him with a snowmobile. Plus, who knew how Blake's parents would react. They probably wouldn't be very happy with Mom and Dad for losing their kid.

Sure, he could be annoying, but he could be fun too, and I wished he was still my friend.

With a sigh, I pointed my board downhill.

"Addison!"

AJ caught up to me.

"You're going the wrong way. Dad said to stay on Juniper Run," he said.

"No, your friend is going the wrong way," I said, pointing to the blue dot farther down the hill. It was shrinking smaller and smaller as we watched it. "If we don't catch up to him, he's going to get lost." Without waiting for a reply, I leaned downhill and left AJ behind. A minute later he caught up to me.

Trapper's Pass was a narrow shortcut to the other side of the mountain. It was lined with scruffy pine trees, and their long blue shadows made stripes on the snow. For a while it was quiet—only the icy hiss of our snowboards as we slid along. I wished it could be like this more often. AJ and me hanging out. Like the old days. This is what my friends thought about when they imagined having a twin brother. They didn't imagine the arguments or their brother eating the last chocolate-covered granola bar.

We didn't reach Blake until the bottom of the hill. When we finally skidded to a stop on the packed snow, he spread his arms in victory.

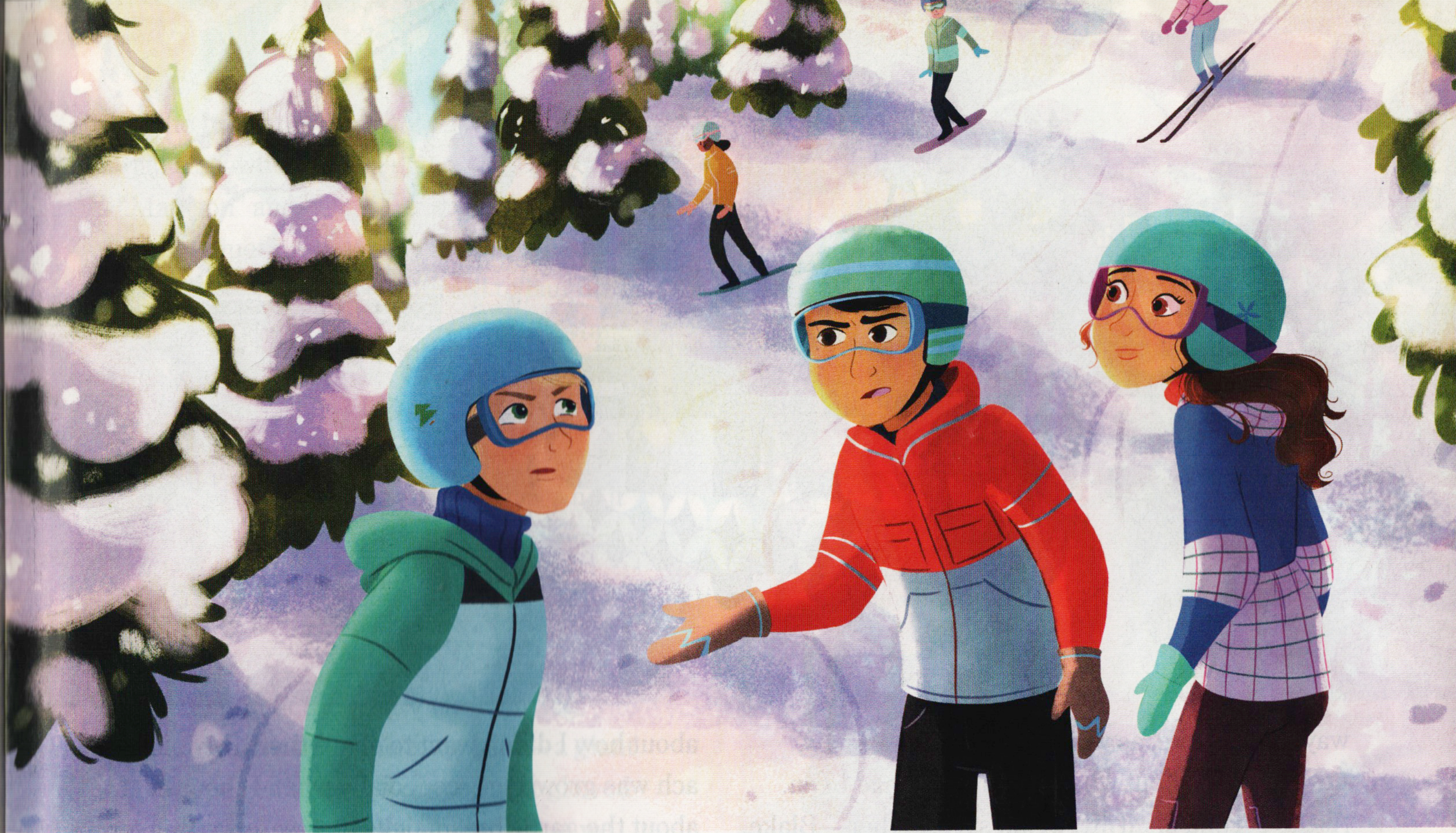
"I totally beat you!" he said to AJ.

"It wasn't a race," AJ said. His face was hidden by his goggles, but he was using his annoyed voice.

"Yeah, and you went the wrong way!" I broke in. "We were supposed to follow our dad."

"I wasn't the only one who went the wrong way," Blake glared at me.

"Addison went this way to follow you. If it



weren't for her, you'd be lost right now," AJ said. I couldn't tell whether he was actually sticking up for me or just mad about Blake beating him. "It's going to take *days* to get back from here."

AJ was exaggerating, but I knew he was as tired and hungry as I was. I looked at the trail map that was posted at the bottom of the hill. It would take us three runs and three chairlift rides to get back to our parents. I unzipped my pocket and pulled out our phone. Two missed calls from Mom and Dad. I called them back and explained what had happened. They sounded worried, but I assured them we knew the way back.

"So now what?" Blake had stopped celebrating and looked serious.

"Now we get on this chairlift, and from there?" AJ turned to me.

"We want to take Robinson's Ridge," I said. "Just follow me when we get there." I unsnapped one of my boots and shuffled to get in line, dragging my board behind me. I heard AJ's and Blake's raised voices and tried to tune them out. As I scooted forward to wait for my chair, AJ slid in next to me. The creaky chairlift scooped us up like a giant bird and we were airborne, flying upward to the top of the mountain.

"What happened to Blake?" I asked.

"He's back there," AJ said. "He's kind of bugging me." He shifted in his seat. "Did Mom and Dad sound mad?"

"Nah," I said. "Just worried. I told them we knew the way back."

"Well, *you* do," AJ said.

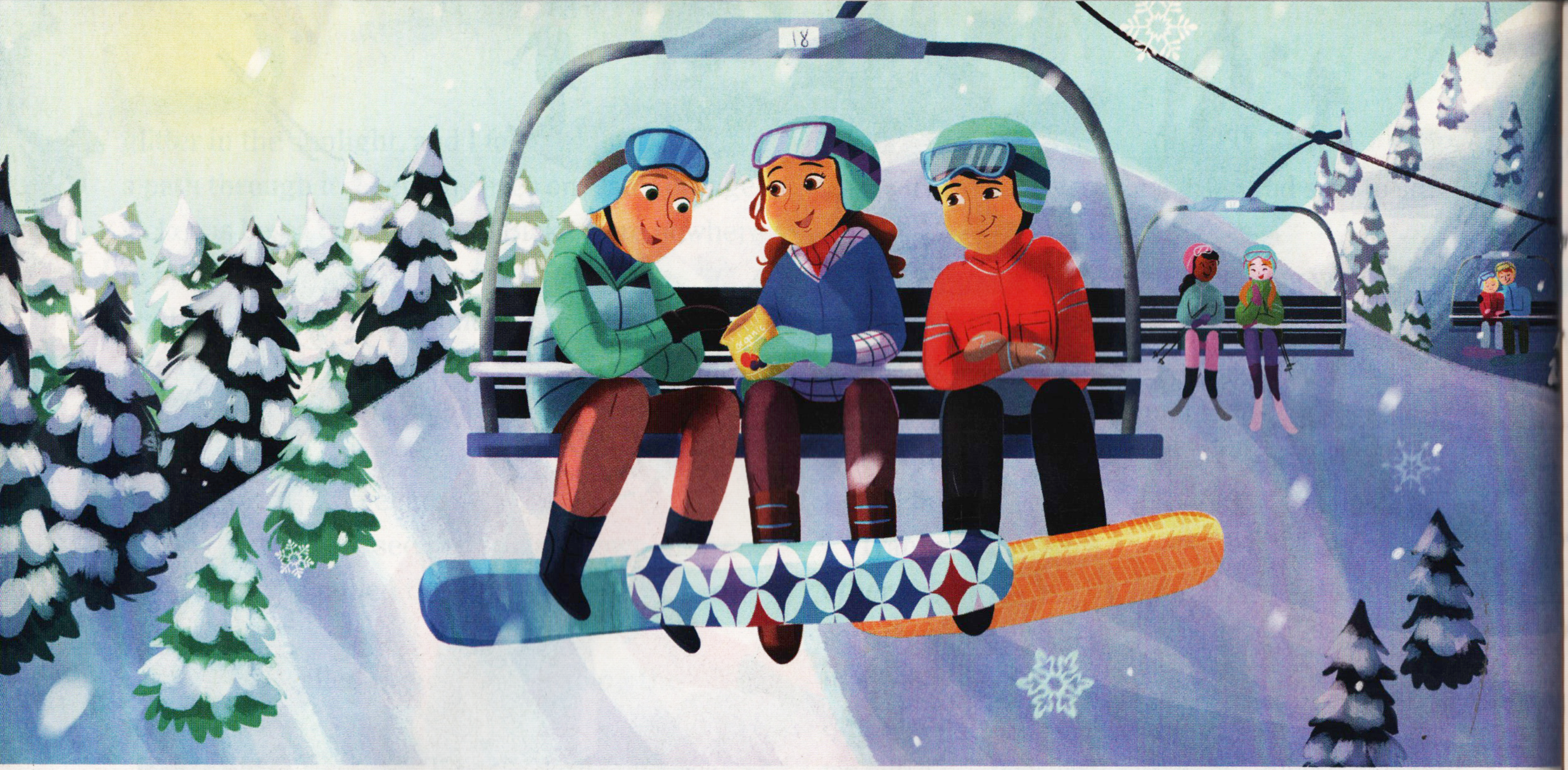
"Yeah, so you'd better not ditch me," I said.

"I won't."

We waited for Blake at the top.

"No racing," AJ announced. Blake didn't say anything.

The three of us stuck together this time. We knew we were on an adventure, a small one any-



way. For a while, as we crisscrossed the snow, I even forgot about what a pain Blake had been. At the second chairlift, we all sat together—Blake, me, then AJ. No one talked at first. Then, over the whirring of the chairlift, I could hear AJ humming a song our grandpa sang to us, something about snow that looks like marshmallows. AJ was always humming or whistling or singing. Mom calls him a "one-man band." For some reason, his humming didn't bother me this time. I started to sing along, surprised I remembered the words. Then AJ started singing, too. By the time we got to the end, we were belting it out like we were in a musical. People down below were starting to look up at us.

"You guys are weird." Blake shook his head. I shrugged and smiled behind my scarf. AJ started humming again. A different song this time. He couldn't help himself.

Finally we arrived at the bottom of the last chairlift.

"I'm starving," Blake whined. I thought about the fruit snacks in my pocket. Actually I thought about how I didn't want to share them. My stomach was growling—especially when I thought about the garlic breadsticks that were waiting for us. I pulled the package from my pocket and took a few.

"Here." I offered some to Blake. Blake looked surprised, but he took some and I handed the rest to AJ. We slowly passed over the bunny hill, where tiny skiers were lined up with their instructors. It reminded me of our first time on the mountain.

"Remember that time Dad was showing us how to use the towrope, and then he fell on it?" I said.

"Yeah," AJ laughed. "They had to stop the whole thing just so he could get up again." AJ and I had refused to snowboard after that. Dad had thought about signing us up for hockey instead.

"Remember that time there was a big snowstorm the day we were supposed to go home?" AJ said. "They closed all the roads and we got to stay here for two more days and miss school?"

"Yeah, that was awesome," I said.

After that, each story kept leading to a new one, like the time I tried skiing and went backward down the hill without falling once. Or the time we had a snowboard instructor who kept calling us "Madison" and "Ian" instead of "Addison" and "Aidan." Sometimes one of us didn't even finish a story before the other one started to laugh.

Not surprisingly, Blake grew bored. "Man," he finally interrupted us. "It's like you guys are speaking your own language!"

AJ and I didn't answer, but I knew Blake was right. Twins or not, AJ was my brother, and it turned out we still had some things in common after all.

◆ ◆ ◆

That night at the winter carnival, ice sculptures lit up the town park—a giant star, a globe, even a dragon that glowed green and pink. I took a lot of pictures as we walked to the end of the park to wait for the fireworks show. We found a bench near the snow-sculpture contest. A few sculptures were unfinished like ours, and one—a horse—had a "Winner" sign in front of it.

"Maybe you guys should finish your castle while we wait," Mom said.

"We don't have any tools," Blake said.

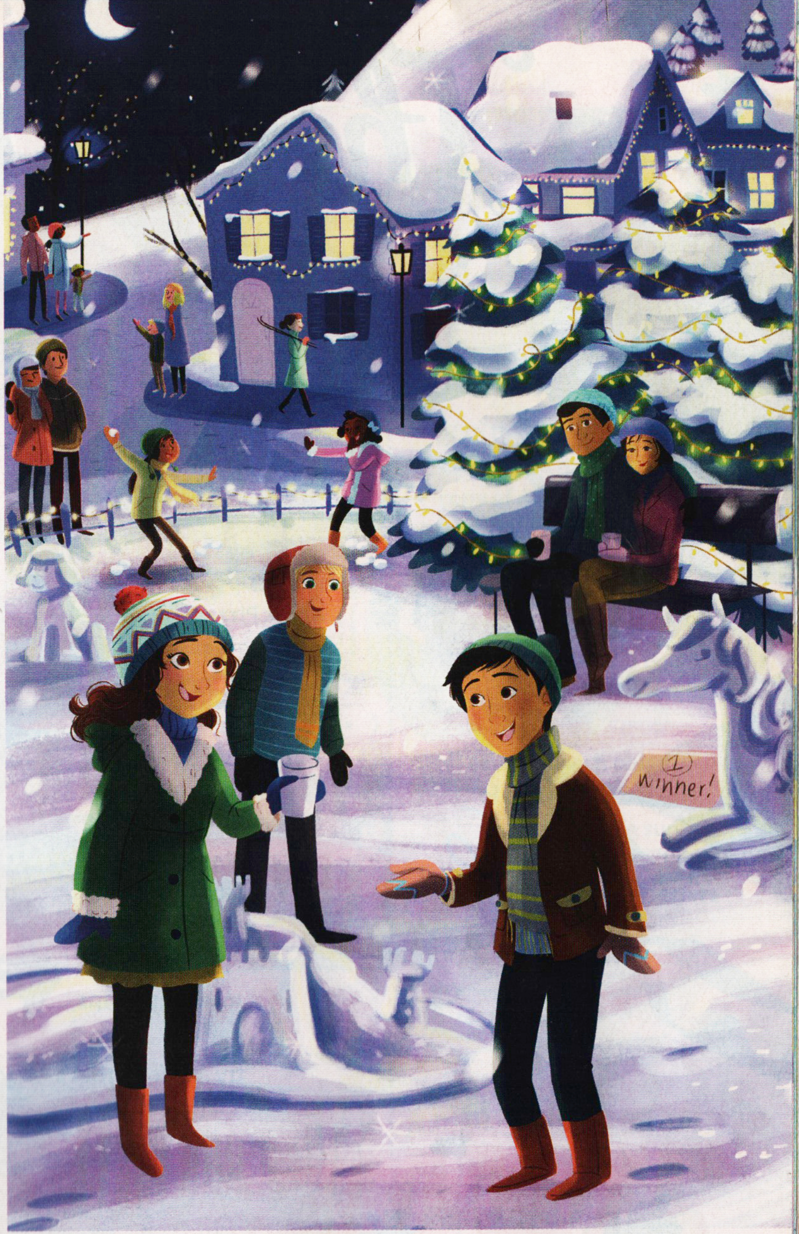
"We can use this." I held up my empty hot chocolate cup. Without waiting for an answer, I walked over to the castle.

"I'll help." AJ joined me, followed by Blake. We looked at the unfinished towers and the moat. "It doesn't really look like a castle," AJ said, "and we can't really make walls with just a cup."

"Then let's turn it into something else," I said. I looked at the cup in my hand and an idea was already forming. But AJ beat me to it.

"A city?"

"That's what I was thinking." ★



Meet the Author

About age 10

Now

Andrea Debbink

Growing up, my family spent a lot of time skiing and snowboarding each winter. I have great memories of skiing with my dad and older brothers—our experiences gave me the inspiration for this story!

This or That

Food-tastic!

Would you rather . . .

climb a giant fruit kebab **OR** a giant corn on the cob?

make recipes for a Pink Pizzazz sleepover **OR** a Really Rainbow party?

eat two chocolate pies **OR** a mystery-flavor birthday cake?

be a guest on your favorite cooking show **OR** have your own personal chef?

use polka-dot measuring cups **OR** glow-in-the-dark utensils?

try any food that's mentioned in your favorite book **OR** use a machine that can create any food you want in five seconds?

eat gelatin that smells like flowers **OR** drink juice that smells like birdseed?

take a bath in fudge **OR** take a nap on a bed of cotton candy?

wear an apron covered with dancing chipmunks **OR** singing squirrels?

eat penguin-shaped ice pops **OR** polar-bear-shaped chocolates?

hold a bake sale to raise money for a new animal shelter **OR** a new school playground?

get caught in a storm where it's raining apple juice **OR** cranberry juice?

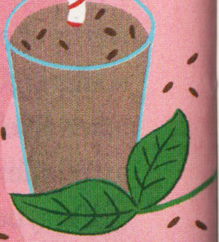


Illustration: Julissa Mora

B

Coming Up: Parties

10 small things you can do to make a BIG difference

Kindness can change the world.

D

American Girl

10 tricks for your pics

Get the haircut you want

Quiz: Which room style are you?

So sweet! One girl, one horse, two of a kind

A Pack of Free Horse Posters! ★ Mmm . . . Chocolate Cake

Coming up in the June issue of *American Girl* magazine

Goodbye School!

A

Snappy Pics

Practically a pro or first-time photographer? Follow these instructions to take your best shot!

C

Shining Star

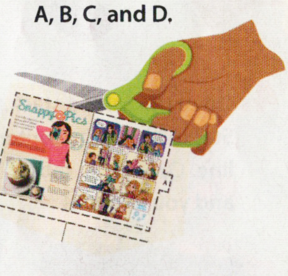
Shamrock Smoothie

A little laugh goes a long way!

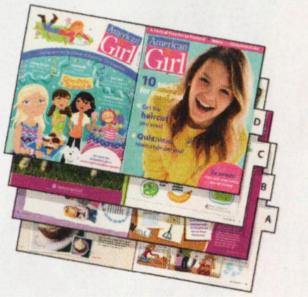
Mini Mag

With the Mini Mag, you can make a miniature copy of *American Girl* for your doll or stuffed animal. All you need are scissors and a stapler. Read the directions all the way through before you begin.

1. Cut out each pair of pages only on the dotted lines. Be sure to cut around the tabs marked with the letters A, B, C, and D.



2. Stack the pages on top of one another in the order shown below, with the letters on the tabs facing up.

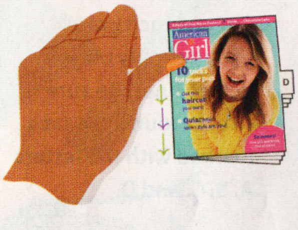


Continued ☛

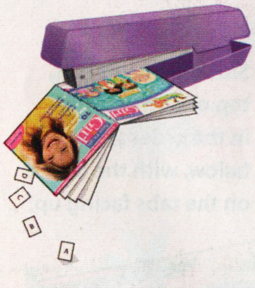
Illustrations: Monika Roe

Mini Mag

3. Fold the stack of pages in half along the solid line in the center. The cover of the magazine should now be on top. Run your fingernail down the folded edge to help the pages lie flat.



4. Open the folded stack. Staple along the center line. Cut off the tabs, and you're done!

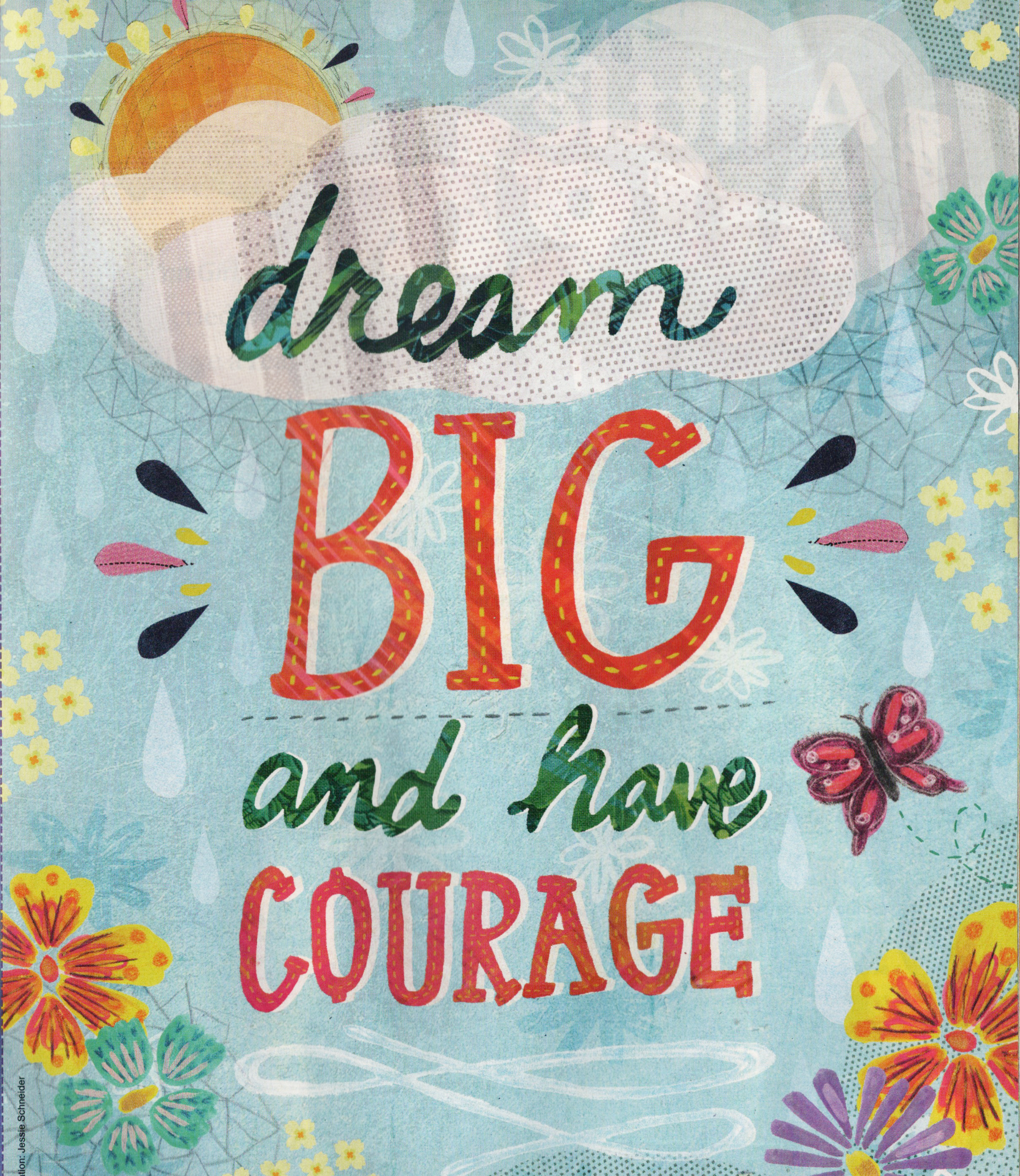


AG Poll
Paw-fect Pals
Answers
dream BIG and have COURAGE
American Girl

According to Aggie
Cat-astrophe!

Speak Up!
Style

Style with a Smile
Get the haircut you want by following a few easy steps.
Before Your Appointment
During Your Appointment
After Your Appointment


dream
BIG
and have
COURAGE

Carefully cut along the dotted lines to remove your posters.

Illustration: Jessie Schneider

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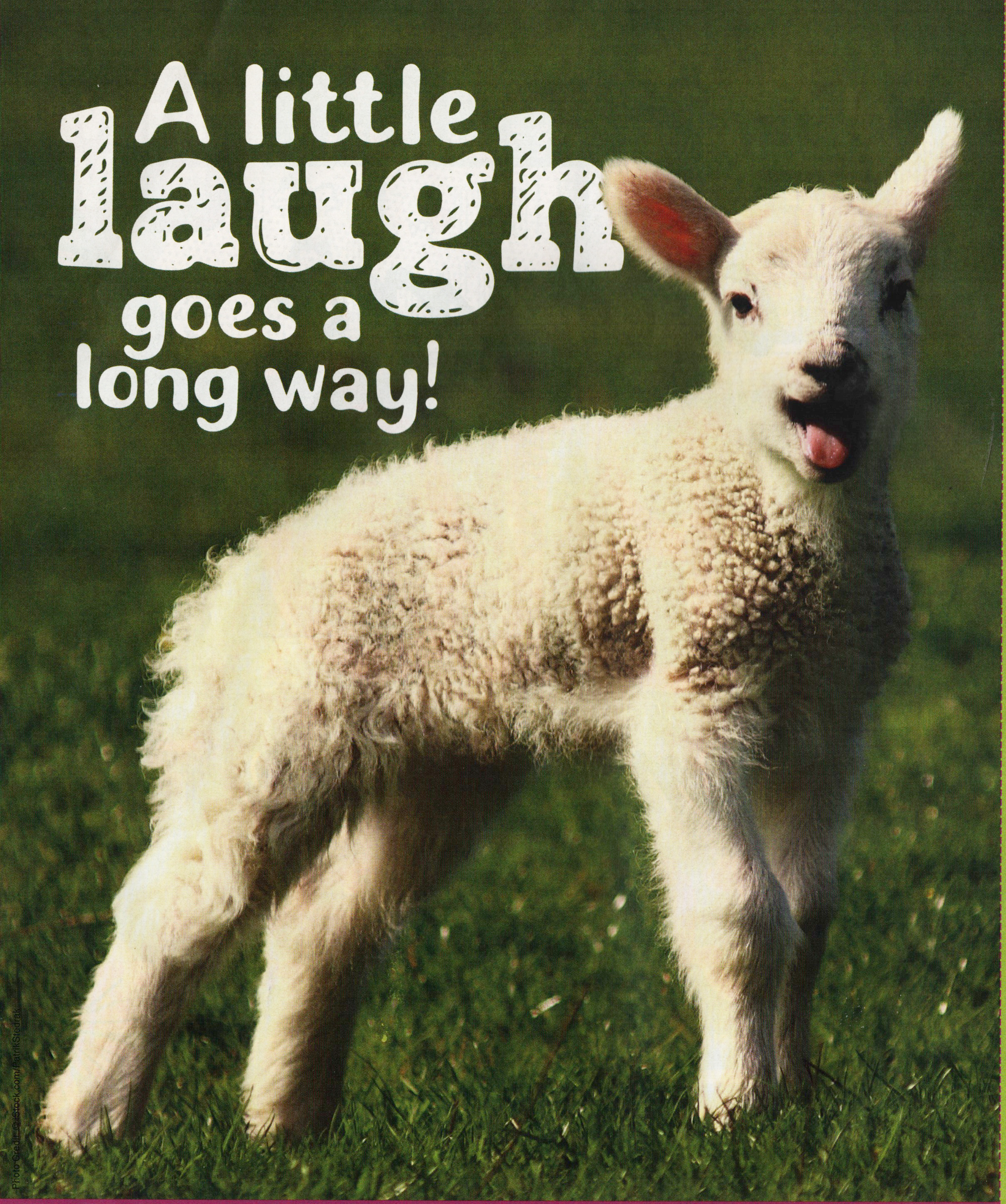
A little
laugh
goes a
long way!

Photo Credit: iStock.com/PatrikStedrak

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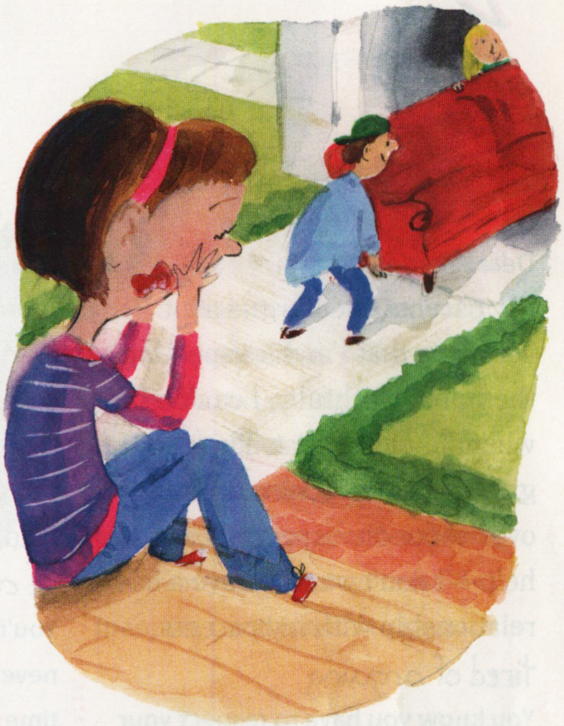
HELP!



Dear *American Girl*,

Last week, I cried when my parents sold our old couch! I have a really hard time letting go of things. Please tell me what to do.

Holding on

Change can be hard. An item that has been around for a long time can feel as if it's a part of you. But losing an item doesn't mean that you're losing part of yourself. You're also not losing your good feelings and memories. It might help to take pictures of beloved items and add them to a scrapbook or album. That way, you'll never forget them.

Dear *American Girl*,

When my teacher calls on me in school, my face turns bright red. Even worse, most of the boys in my class tease me about it!

red face

Wow, making fun of something about a person that she can't control? Not cool. Chances are, these boys just want to get you to react so that they can laugh some more. If you don't make a big deal, they'll probably drop it. Ignore them, or ask them to stop. Try, "Really? What's the big deal?" or "Rude! Cut it out, please!" If they don't stop, talk to a trusted adult.

★

Dear *American Girl*,

I love to write and make journals. The trouble is, when I sit down to write, I have no idea what I should put down.

writing problem!

It's a lot of pressure on a writer to fill those big blank pages! So try this: Challenge yourself to write only one sentence. Make it a great sentence, or a long one, or the shortest, prettiest one you can imagine. You could even choose just one lovely, meaningful word to describe your day. When you have more to say, you'll be able to write in your journal, as easily as breathing.

★

Dear *American Girl*,

I want to be a vegetarian and not eat meat from now on. But I worry—what do I say if I go to a friend's home for dinner?

Help

Changing your diet is a big decision—one you should definitely discuss with a parent. But if you do make a change, it shouldn't be a problem to let friends' parents know, just as you might with an allergy. "Thank you for inviting me! I want to tell you that I avoid meat. Please don't make anything special for me—I can always find something on the table that will work."

★

Illustrations: Laura Cornell

MORE HELP!

Dear *American Girl,*

My parents and I argue a lot. They say that I'm disrespecting them, but truthfully, I can't tell when I'm doing that. They just give the same lecture over and over about disrespect. Please help—I don't want to have a bad relationship with my parents.

tired of arguing

You know you have to respect your parents—that's pretty much the rule everywhere. To do that, you may need to change how you act or speak. In order to get it right, you need details, so talk to your parents. In a calm moment, ask them to tell you exactly what they mean when they say you're being disrespectful. Say: "Fighting with you makes me so unhappy, and I want things to be better. Can you give me examples of me being disrespectful? When I understand what you mean, I can work on changing." Ask to agree on a code word for them to use when you're being disrespectful (such as "white rabbit") so that you can solve this with less arguing. Good luck.

★

Dear *American Girl,*

I looove my tablet! I love playing games and watching videos—it's so fun. My parents say I'm on it too much, and they're right. I say I'm going to stop, but I don't. And I need more family time.

I can't stop!

You're right that screen time is never as important as real-life time with family and friends. You need help breaking away, and your parents are a good resource. Set a tablet time limit for yourself, and ask your parents to help you stick to it. Also, make yourself stop and think before you start a new game or open a new app. *Do I NEED to do this?* If the answer is *Not really,* put down the tablet quickly, get up, and walk away. Practice this, and soon you should be able to snap yourself out of your tablet daze.

★

Dear *American Girl,*

I am strong and tall, and I used to pick up my friends as a joke. I don't do it anymore, but some of my friends still climb on me like I'm a jungle gym! It hurts, and they don't stop when I ask.

Strong Girl

Your friends probably mean no harm, but they also need to respect your space and your body. Keep reminding them to cut it out. "Ouch! Can you not do that?" Then try: "Remember I said I don't like that? Please stop." Then: "I've asked you a bunch of times to quit jumping on me. Why haven't you stopped?" Go to an adult if you need help.

★

even MORE HELP!

Dear *American Girl,*

Bragging is my problem. I'm talking about my accomplishments, but then I realize, *Oops, I think I've already shared this,* and people think I'm bragging. By then, it's too late.

bragger

Celebrating your accomplishments is great! Sharing can seem less like bragging when you focus on the hard work you did along the way. Or, when you're talking about something lucky that happened to you, share the amazement with the people you're telling: "I know—I can't believe it, either!" That way, you'll seem proud and modest instead of braggy. Be sure to admire others' achievements, too.

★

Dear *American Girl,*

I think I want bangs! But I just finished growing out my hair, and if I don't like the bangs, I don't want to have to wait for them to grow out again.

Should I get bangs?

Cutting bangs is a big change. Unless you're 100 percent sure you want them, how about a compromise? Ask your stylist for a few long layers around your face. That will change up your look and give you some shorter pieces in front. It's a cut that won't take as much time to grow out if you change your mind—or will be easy to transform into bangs if you decide to go for it later.

★

Dear *American Girl,*

A new girl has joined our class. I'd like to be friends with her, but for some reason, all of my friends want to exclude her. I want to be with my friends, but it feels like a punch in the stomach when we leave this girl out on purpose.

Conflicted

First, try this: Hang out with this girl outside of school to get to know her better. Then invite one or two kind friends from your group to hang out with the two of you. When several of you know this girl better, it might be easier to include her in your group. If you stand up for this girl but your friends stand firm about excluding her, then you can ask yourself if these are good friends to have.

★

Advice from You

"If you've had a rough day, have a relaxing dinner and go to bed. Put on some calming music—even lullabies—and breathe some deep, long breaths. Things will be better in the morning."

Amanda P.

Age 11, Florida

Need advice? Got advice? Write:

Help!
***American Girl* magazine**
8400 Fairway Place
Middleton, WI 53562

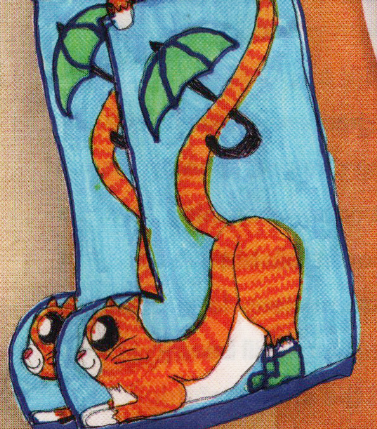
We can't respond to all letters. But we read everything you send!

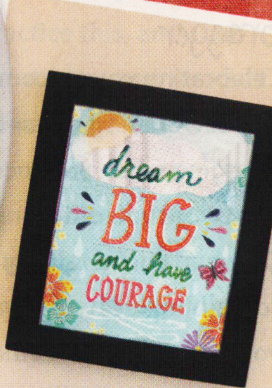
Behind the Scenes

This issue was packed with style and sweets.

Here are some of the other animals living on Alexia and Tony D.'s ranch.

How purrfect! This rain boot was created by 10-year-old Rose K. of Kansas.





Need some inspiration? Use an 8-by-10-inch frame to hang our quote poster in your room!

Riley
Melissa

This is how we created the garden scene for the rain boot photo shoot.

Do you love to speak your mind? You'd be perfect for our online panel! Ask a parent if you can go to americangirl.com/magpanel to give your opinion about the magazine.

new!
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Illustrations: Carol Yoshizumi

Coming up in the May/June issue of *American Girl* magazine

Goodbye School!
HELLO SUMMER!
YEAR BOOK

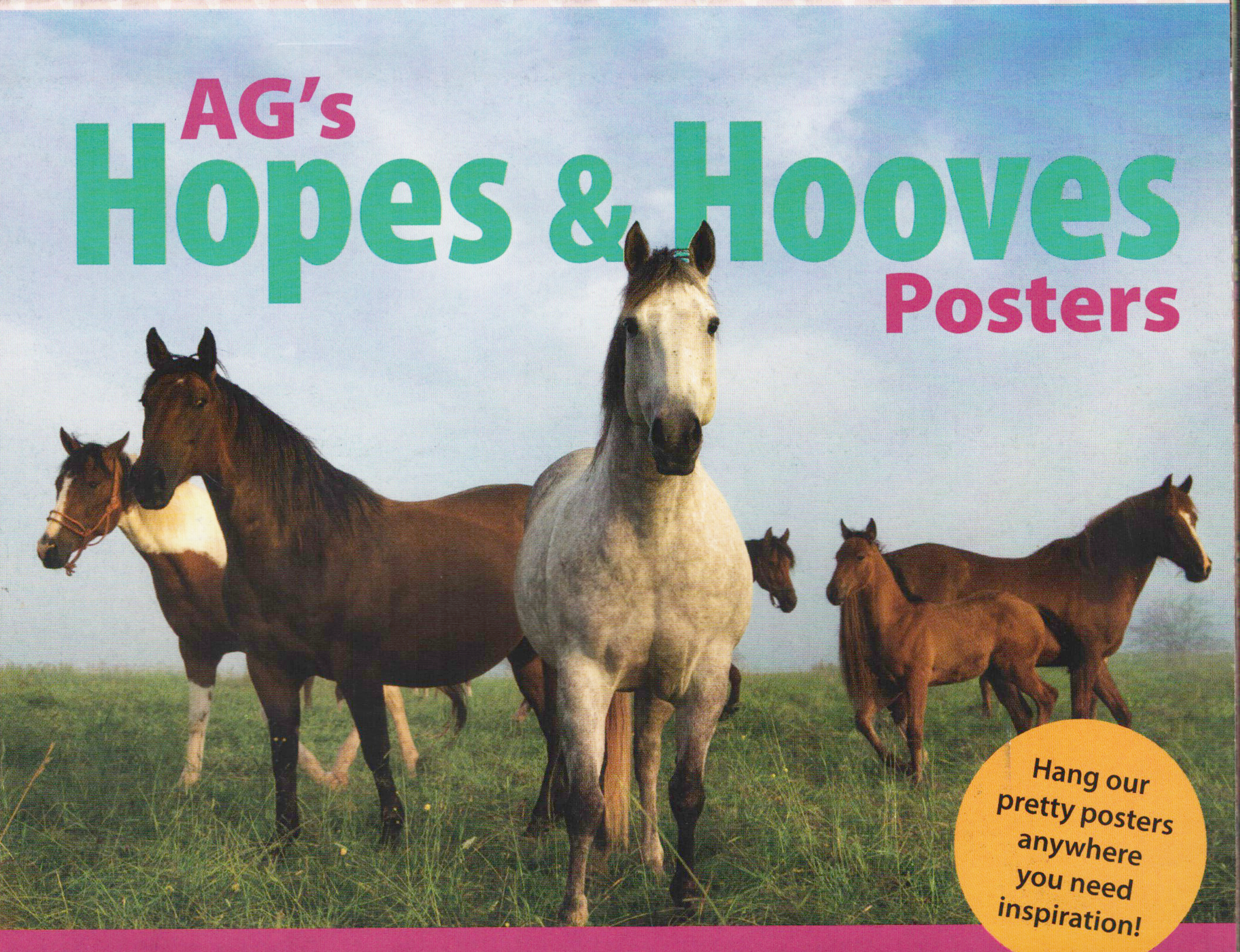
Hang It Up!
Make wall art for your room.

Farewell!
Throw an end-of-the-year party.

Set Sail
Check out sailboats created by girls like you.

Cool Clothes
Take this quiz to discover your summer style.

For more fun and games, go to americangirl.com/playmagazine



AG's Hopes & Hooves Posters

Hang our pretty posters anywhere you need inspiration!

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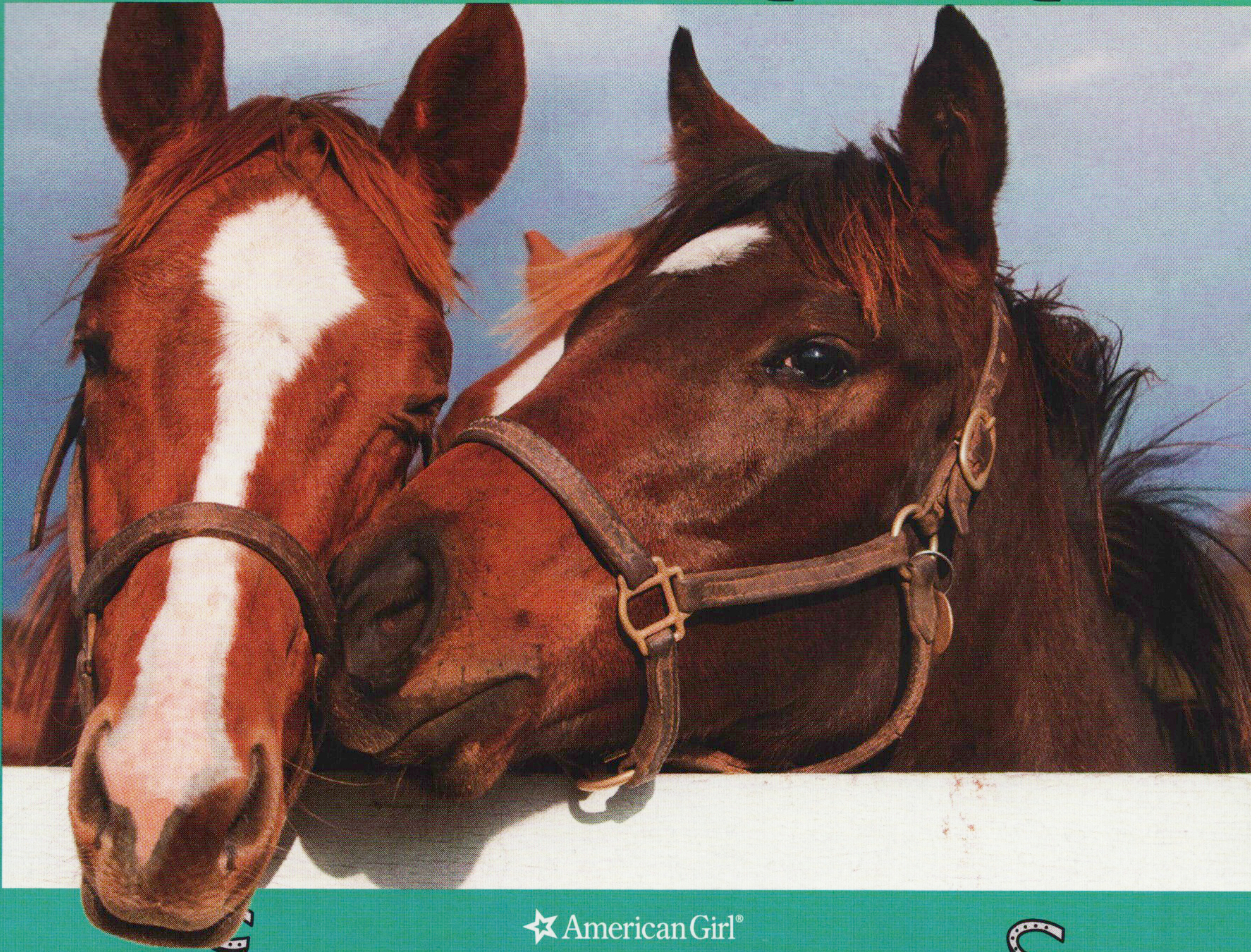

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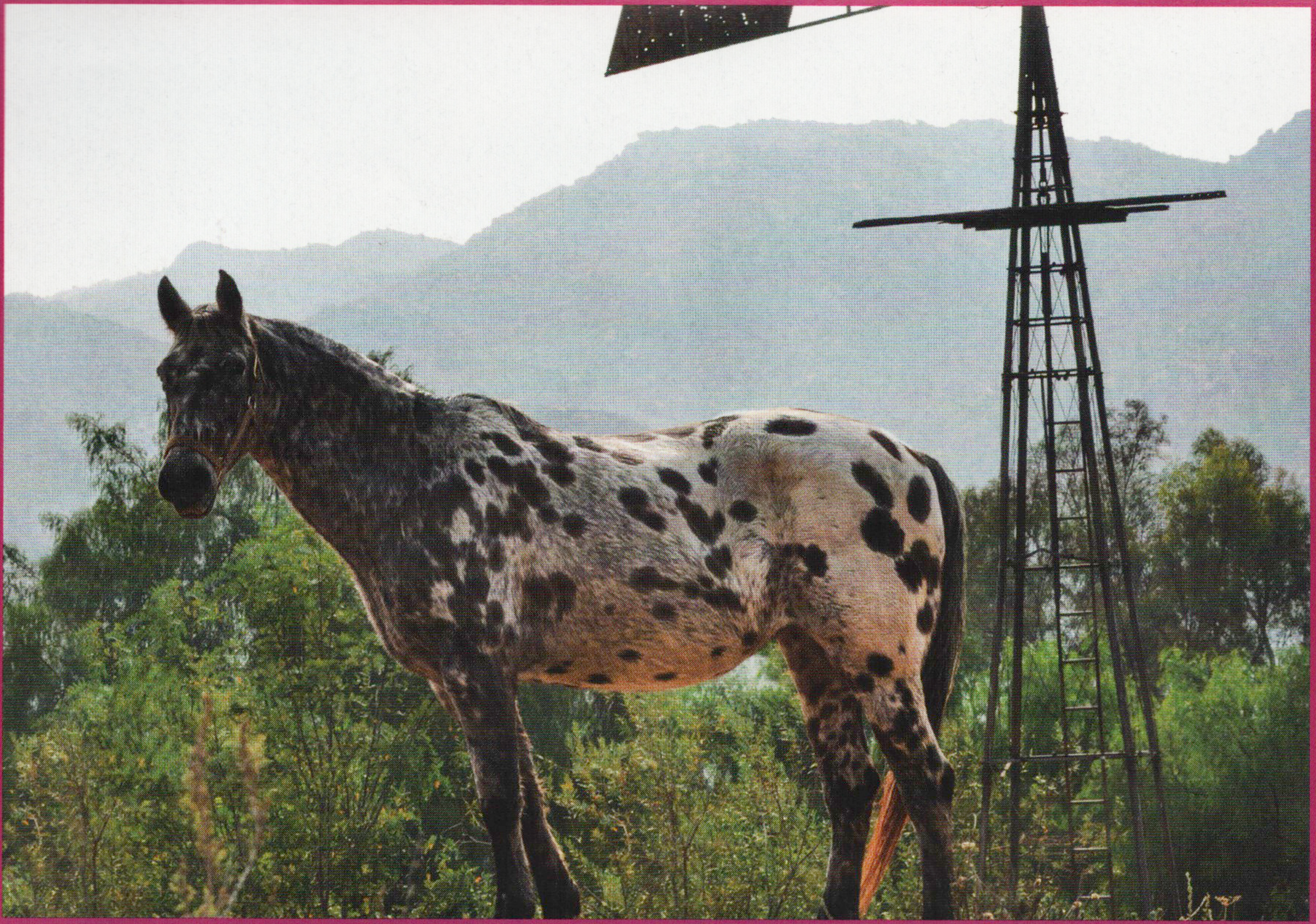

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